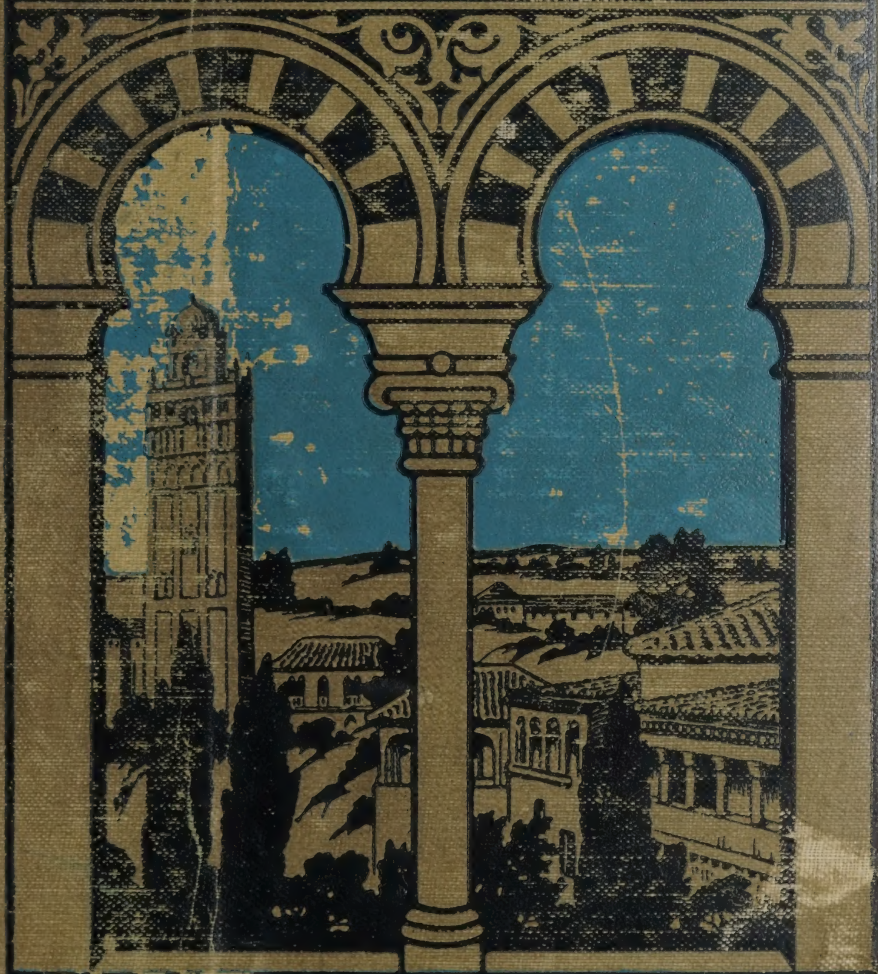
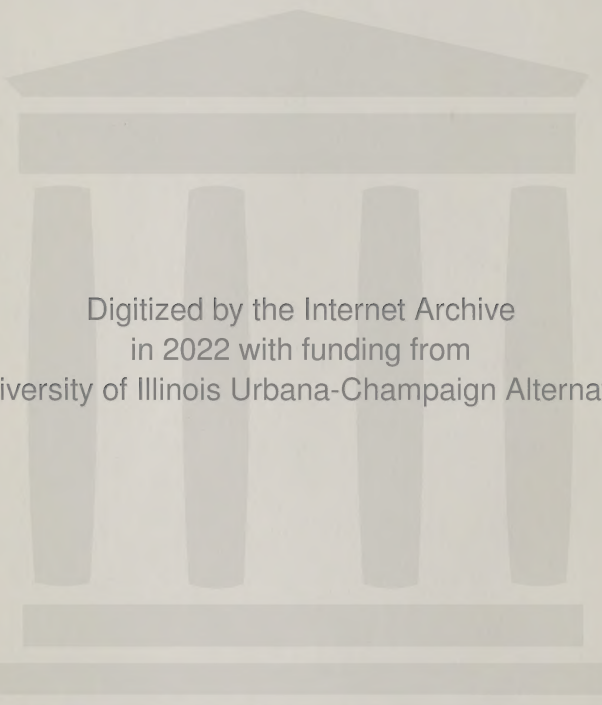


STORIES FROM  
MEDIAEVAL SPAIN  
IERNE L. PLUNKET





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*Photo. by Anderson.*

THE ALHAMBRA.

*Frontispiece.*

*Stories of Medieval Spain.*



STORIES FROM MEDIAEVAL SPAIN



# STORIES FROM MEDIAEVAL SPAIN

BY  
IERNE L. PLUNKET

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"THE HIDDEN CHALICE," ETC.

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EVERY country has its legends of heroes and traitors, its tales of national hopes realised and ambitions defeated: but none can boast a more romantic history than Mediaeval Spain, the golden garden of the Moors and battle-ground of Christian knights and crusaders.

During the centuries that we call the Middle Ages (roughly reckoned from the Fall of the Roman Empire to the Reconquest of Granada in 1492), there emerges from the mesh woven of Spain's invaders, Celt, Greek, Carthaginian, Roman, Visigoth, and Syrian-Berber, the Spaniard himself—proud as his proverb, "He who says 'Spain' has said everything"—chivalrous, yet cruel—despising work, yet indefatigably stubborn in pursuing his end—a born fighter, hater and lover—a soul at the same time mystical, intolerant, and sturdily practical—in all, a personality who has stamped his race-mark on the world.

These stories do not pretend to analyse such a development. Taken partly from popular legends, partly from more authentic chronicles, they are intended as an introduction to the life of the Iberian Peninsula in the days of romance. If they lead but a few of their readers to a deeper interest in the real history of Spain beneath her surface trappings, they will have served their purpose.

IERNE L. PLUNKET.

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# STORIES FROM MEDIAEVAL SPAIN.

## CHAPTER I

### *RODRIGO, THE LAST OF THE GOTHIC KINGS*

“THE blood of the Goths was a fierce blood.”

So says an old Spanish chronicle, and the unwarlike citizens of the Roman Province of Hispania, who first beheld one of the strong-limbed, fair-haired invaders from the North, quick to emphasise his swaggering insolence towards those he had conquered with a blow from his battle-axe, must have trembled for the culture and luxury that to the fallen Empire of Rome had meant life itself.

In large measure the fear proved groundless. Destruction there was, of course, and innovations, as ever where there is conquest; but the Visigoth was no ruthless Hun, despising everything save chaos; and his outward contempt for those who knew not how to fight concealed admiration for the comfort that order and peace were able to bestow.

Thus, during the three hundred years that followed the Visigothic invasion of Spain in the fifth century A.D., the conquerors, instead of exterminating the conquered, gradually absorbed a large portion of the Roman Law, customs and language, even accepting, after a struggle, the orthodox Catholic faith in place of the Arian heresy in which their fathers had been bred.

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This easy fusion was not wholly good; for the shame as well as the glory of the latter years of Rome was born again in the Kingdom of Andalus, flaunting itself in the wealth and magnificence of Visigothic rulers and landowners in contrast to the overtaxed poverty of ordinary citizens and the misery of serfs and slaves.

Only amongst the turbulent nobles was there any trace of the once proud spirit of the Teutonic tribes, and that merely an echo, entirely selfish in its demand for independence.

“King shalt thou be if thou doest right. . . . If thou doest not right, no king shalt thou be.”

This old Gothic formula still held sway at the election of Spanish sovereigns; and since each noble present considered himself a fitting candidate and his neighbour an unworthy rival, few kings were found to do right for any length of time in the eyes of those who had reluctantly chosen them. Eleven out of thirteen successive Spanish rulers met a violent death, while others were sent into monasteries or left, deprived of their sight, to linger out their days in dungeons.

Rodrigo, Duke of Baetica, was the last of these Gothic kings, a romantic figure in legend, but almost unknown, save for a brief mention, in the annals of authentic history.

“He had good natural parts and seemed well-inclined . . . . but he had no discretion in his undertakings.”

This is but a mild description of the man, whose obstinacy and self-indulgence, according to popular legend, sold Christian Spain to the Moors.

We know nothing of Rodrigo's looks and bearing: in one tale his adventures begin when he is over

eighty: in another he is apparently a reckless youth: but all story-tellers concur in praising his prowess as a general, recording how he put to flight the tribes of Biscay and Galicia, whose delight it was to raid the more orderly and fertile provinces of the South.

Triumphant over these barbarians, the victor played the usual part of the ambitious Gothic noble, for, refusing to recognise the young sons of his master, King Wittiza, as heirs to the throne on their father's death, he drove them from Toledo, the capital, and by mingled bribery and threats obtained his own election.

Henceforward he lived as he pleased, indifferent to the threats of the exiled princes, or the mutterings of down-trodden Jews and serfs, contemptuous of possible danger from Moorish and Berber pirates along the Mediterranean coasts.

Once an enthusiastic soldier, he warred no more, save in mimic battlery, planned, if the chroniclers speak true, with a magnificence that drew half the chivalry of Europe to feast and joust within the walls of Toledo. Hither came lords of Gascony, Navarre and Lombardy: Counts of Saxony and the Marches: Dukes of France: an English Prince: a King of Poland: the Emperor's brother from Constantinople: Sultans from Turkey and Bagdad: each and all with their retinues of knights, squires and pages, received according to their state with a hospitality and luxury worthy of Imperial Rome.

While the tournaments lasted, the inhabitants of the capital lived for the most part in tents without the walls, and here, in hastily-improvised workshops, over one thousand five hundred master armourers worked day and night, fashioning maces, shields, head-pieces, and fine Toledan blades.



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Toledo herself, lent for the time to her foreign guests, became, instead of a fortress, a city of palaces and revelry: night with its dances and feasts succeeding to the tournaments of the day, and all her streets resounding with the fame and glory of her generous king, Rodrigo, lord of the Goths. As he rode in the lists, distinguishing himself against all who dared to meet his lance, or dallied amongst the ladies, admired and courted, it is scarcely strange if he believed himself invincible and the rule of his race eternal.

One day, soon after he came to the throne of Andalusia, he sat in the great hall of his palace in Toledo and gave audience to two old men, clad in white robes embroidered with occult signs of stars and heavenly bodies. King Rodrigo had never seen them before, and his curiosity was excited by the collection of rusty keys that hung from their girdles.

"Why are you thus burdened with these keys?" he demanded.

Then one of the old men, stepping forward, answered: "Lord Rodrigo, these are the keys of the Kings who reigned before thee. Behold each in turn has affixed his padlock to the iron gate of the enchanted tower that Hercules set up of old, weaving a spell within to keep at bay invaders from the African shore."

"And the spell? Knowest thou its secret?"

The old man shook his head.

"None hath known," he replied gravely, "save Hercules, and none shall know save with peril to himself and his land. It is, therefore, we are come, O King, to pray thee affix thy padlock also, as all the kings have done before thee."

"Such a tale is mere jest," interrupted Rodrigo, adding angrily as he saw their horror, "and even were it true thou hast awakened in me a burning desire to solve this mystery. Lead me to the tower that I may force an entrance."

At this both the old men began to entreat the king that he would give up his design, wringing their hands and saying:

"Of a certainty, honesty, prudence, and policy are all in accord with our advice."

Rodrigo, who cared not a fig for honesty, prudence, or policy, snapped his fingers and laughed.

"Nay, but my curiosity shall be satisfied," he concluded the interview. "Bring me to the tower and that speedily as ye value your lives."

Then the King and all his court, led by the two old men, set out through the streets of Toledo to the rocky heights beyond the river; and there on a high cliff stood a tower with walls of shining jasper and marble. The courtiers, who had ridden forth as gaily as their monarch, were now afraid, and after whispering amongst themselves, some of the highest rank, held in most respect, approached the king.

"My lord, if it be treasure that thou dost seek," they urged, "tell us the amount of thy expectations. We ourselves will then collect the sum and deposit it in the royal treasury. Only do thou affix thy padlock also and let us depart again to Toledo as we came."

Impatiently, as if he had not heard them, Rodrigo leaped from his horse and began to mount the steep path to the tower. He cared for gold—yes! but not even gold could satisfy his love of excitement or pleasure when they gained the mastery over his senses.

Taking the keys from the old men in white, he endeavoured to turn them in the locks of the big iron gate that barred his entrance; but the locks were rusty and it was sunset ere he, and the old men, and the courtiers who worked at his bidding, were able to make the bolt yield.

As it at last fell back, the gate swung open, and Rodrigo saw a large hall, and just within the entrance, guarding it, a figure cast in bronze, taller than any living man, clad in armour, and wielding a mace, with which it struck the air, now on this side of the doorway, now on that.

"My lord, we pray thee turn back!" cried the trembling courtiers. "This magic will be our ruin." But Rodrigo, addressing the figure, boldly called to it:

"Let me pass in safety, I entreat, for I am king of this land and plan no act of sacrilege."

The bronze figure paused with mace uplifted, and beneath its gigantic arm the King and his retinue entered the hall. On a table of silver and gold encrusted with precious stones, stood a marble urn, and on the urn was written the following inscription:

"Here lies the mystery of the tower. . . .  
The hand of none save a king can open it, but let him beware since he shall learn of wonderful things that shall come to pass even before his death."

For a minute Rodrigo hesitated, then with a haughty gesture of contempt at the frightened faces of his attendants, lifted the marble lid and disclosed a folded parchment. Unrolled, it depicted in bright colours an



array of brown-skinned horsemen, shaggy-haired and clad in fur, bearing in their hands long spears, while at their belts hung curved swords, strange to Christian eyes, that glittered in the light from the jasper walls.

The silk-robed nobles looked at this picture of armed savages with disappointment and contempt, Rodrigo with impatience for such a paltry mystery.

"Read the script that is written below," he commanded, and after a silence the courtier to whom he had handed it began in a trembling voice:

"Behold, when this asylum is violated and the spell contained in the urn broken, then the people painted within the urn shall invade Andalusia, overthrow the throne of her king, and subdue the whole country."

As he still read aloud the magic picture on the parchment began to blurr and change, till out of the misty background emerged a scene of battle. Then were shown brown-skinned horsemen, bearing the banner of the crescent triumphantly aloft, and a golden cross trampled on the ground beneath their feet. . . . Here were Christian warriors galloping wildly as if in flight, and in the foreground a milk-white steed, riderless, but bearing a saddle studded with jewels.

"It is my horse—Orelia," cried the king, overcome with terror for the first time; and he and his retinue turned and fled. As they reached the outer air, legend says that they stumbled over the dead bodies of the two old men in white robes, and that when they reached the roadway below, the tower above burst into a blaze of fire that consumed the jasper walls and every-

thing within. Nor was there a trace found afterwards save drops of blood dried on the ground where the burning ashes of the magic stronghold had fallen.

In the luxury of his court Rodrigo buried the memory of Hercules' tower. Every day he hawked and rode abroad with his glittering train, but the men and women who heard him clatter through the streets neither cheered nor ran to their doors to rejoice in his brave display. To those who are brought so low in the enjoyment of life that the very animals have more rest and nourishment, there is little appeal of patriotism or pride in their king. One ruler is the same as another.

Rodrigo, for his part, was indifferent to their sullen brooding; for he looked on the citizens of Toledo and the other cities in his dominions as so much human cattle, to be worked, driven into battle, fleeced of money and goods, until they died of exhaustion and another generation took their place. His world was that of the nobles who sat round his board and flattered and praised him.

Chief favourite amongst these boon companions was Count Julian, Governor of the strip of land opposite to Spain called Ceuta, that alone of North Africa remained at this date a Christian province. Nominally, Ceuta's Governor owed allegiance to the Greek Emperor at Constantinople; but, as every year advancing waves of Mahometan warriors pushed their way along the coast westward from Egypt and northward across the Mediterranean and Syria to the very gates of the Golden Horn, the Count would have fared ill indeed had not his Visigothic neighbours in Spain been ready to come to his aid.

No help could he expect from his hard-pressed overlord, the Emperor of the East, but in Wittiza Count Julian had found an able ally, and hoped to gain another in Wittiza's successor. This was the cause that brought him to the Court of Toledo with a present of hawks and the petition that he might leave his beautiful daughter, Florinda, amongst the Queen's ladies, safe from any sudden invasion of his African province by Saracens.

Rodrigo, to whom the Count, proud and intractable in nature as himself, was a boon companion, willingly agreed. Then the Governor of Ceuta, after he had feasted and hawked, rode away southwards to uphold the banner of Christendom across the seas, while Florinda remained behind amongst the Queen's ladies, and all the Court talked of her beauty and innocence, and of who amongst the young nobles was worthy to claim her as his bride.

Now Rodrigo heard this gossip and, seeing the maiden one day in the Queen's private garden, his own passion became inflamed, and he desired her for himself above all treasures. In vain Florinda, when confident in his royal pride he made advances, rejected them indignantly: in vain she pleaded the protection he had pledged her in her father's absence. What the last of the Gothic kings desired in a moment's caprice he was accustomed to seize without thought of honour or policy; and so the love that was denied of free will he took by force and carried away Florinda from the Queen's protection.

One evening, some months later, the Governor of Ceuta, bravely maintaining his African outpost against the Moors, received a messenger from Andalusia, a

messenger pale and weary, carrying a secret letter that, had it been found on his person on the other side of the Straits, would, he declared, have lost him his life. This letter unfolded, revealed a message from Florinda, despairing and pitiful, showing how she had been betrayed and upbraiding the treachery of her protector.

Count Julian, when he had read it, strode up and down the room with rage.

"By the faith of the Messiah," he took an oath, "I will undermine his throne and spread civil war in his dominions until the whole be overthrown."

Afterwards, when he had gained control over his fury, he began to plot his revenge, for he was a more subtle man than King Rodrigo, though equally passionate and self-centred. Instead of at once showing his determination to ruin the ally who had played him false, even if need be at the expense of Christendom, he crossed the sea and rode to the Court of Toledo in the guise of friendliness.

The King was angry when he saw him, for it was mid-winter, and he had believed him sea-bound for some months.

"What has brought thee here?" he exclaimed. "Thou knowest well that this is neither time nor occasion for coming to Court."

Then Count Julian excused himself humbly. The matter was urgent . . . his wife was ill and could no longer support the absence of her daughter, so that he had been forced by her entreaties to pledge the girl's speedy return.

As soon as Rodrigo heard this his brow cleared. He had already wearied of his passion for Florinda and was glad that her sad eyes would reproach him no



longer. With many compliments and gifts he sped father and daughter on their way.

"Obtain for me some of those swift hawks of thine and come again with them," he called aloud in parting, and Count Julian, bowing to the ground, answered:

"Doubt not, O King, but I shall return soon. By the faith of the Messiah I shall not rest satisfied until I bring thee such swift hawks as never in all thy life hast thou beheld."

Count Julian, as he spoke, knew nothing of the marble urn, but the hawks he had in mind were swift, brown-skinned horsemen with shaggy hair and flashing scimitars, men who called not on the name of Christ but on Allah and his prophet Mahomet, and who in the name of Allah and Mahomet were ever ready to swoop, spear in hand, on the dominions of those whom they called unbelievers.

Under the leadership of commanders who feared neither foe nor mountain nor desert, naught save the sin of cowardice, these warriors had swept North Africa from the Red Sea to the Atlantic, absorbing into their ranks the wild Berber tribesmen who had at first withstood their onslaughts.

"God is great," cried Okbah, a famous Mahometan leader, when he first saw the Atlantic, and, flushed with religious frenzy, rode his horse into the waves. "Were I not hindered by this sea I would go forward to the unknown kingdoms of the West, proclaiming the greatness of Thy Holy Name and subduing the nations who worship other gods than Thee."

Foiled in their ambition by the Atlantic, the Arabian armies dreamed with longing of turning northwards to win the marble palaces of Toledo and Cordova, the

cornfields of Murcia and the vineyards of Granada. The outpost of Ceuta fallen, only eight miles of sea would lie between them and this land of their desire. If Count Julian could be overthrown, the "path of God," as they called their fanatical march of conquest, lay clear and shining. Yet twice had Musa, the Conqueror of Africa, been driven back from the walls of Ceuta with all his horsemen and engines of war: twice had he failed!

One night, however, as Musa kept feast at his Court of Kairoan, he was told of the coming of a stranger on a secret mission, and when they were alone the man, drawing back the cloak that had half-concealed his face, stood revealed as Count Julian himself. Haughtily the Christian Governor explained his presence. For private revenge he was willing to betray his trust, and in graphic words he painted the idle, self-indulgent nobles of the Court of Toledo, the disaffected sons of the late King Wittiza with whom he was already in communication, the pleasure-bound Rodrigo, a mere sensual imitation of the warrior of his youthful days. Between treachery and weakness Spain was an easy prey for hawks swift on the wing.

Then Musa, listening, stroked his beard and answered:

"The plot stands well in words but the risk is great. What pledge have I, Count, of the honesty of thine intentions?"

Then the Governor of Ceuta swore that to prove his words he would himself lead a marauding expedition of Moslem Africans against the Spanish coast, and so he did and brought back spoil. And Musa, when he saw the spoil, distrusted the Count no more, for he

realised that the lust of revenge was stronger in him than patriotism, or honour, or the love of his faith.

In this way, legend tells us, Ceuta was betrayed into the hands of the Moslems, and, led by Tarik, one of Musa's generals, a red-haired Berber, the brown-skinned horsemen crossed the Straits, set "like a diamond between two emeralds and two sapphires, the master-stone in the ring of Empire."

When they landed on the opposite shore, they captured amongst other prisoners an old woman, who, seeing Tarik, exclaimed:

"My husband has often told me that a foreign general would subdue this realm. Like thee, he should be wide of forehead and upon his left shoulder would be a dark mole."

Then the Berber chief laid bare his left shoulder that all might see the mole as the woman had described, and his followers' hearts burned high with hope. In memory of their general, they called the rock on which they stood "Gebel-Tarik," or "The Mountain of Tarik," and in the corrupt form "Gibraltar," the key to Southern Spain and the Western Mediterranean, has passed down to history.

From Gibraltar the Moslem army advanced through Spain; and Rodrigo, learning how he had been betrayed by Count Julian, returned in swift wrath from a campaign against the Basques and summoned all Visigothic nobles to join his banner and defend Christendom. Amongst others came the sons of Wittiza with a vast retinue of serfs, their swords in their hands and protestations of loyalty on their lips.

Rodrigo placed these Princes with their uncle, Bishop Oppas, of Seville, on the right wing of his army, and he

himself commanded the centre seated in a litter slung between two mules. Over his head was stretched an awning embroidered with pearls, rubies and emeralds. From his royal seat he could complacently watch his large force winding over the plains, nearly one hundred thousand men, according to the chroniclers; but he could not hear the words of the nobles who rode in the far-distant ranks, muttering amongst themselves as they plotted his downfall.

"This carrion," exclaimed the sons of Wittiza, "has taken possession of the throne unjustly. . . . Let us, as soon as the battle is engaged, give way and leave the Usurper alone to fight the strangers who will soon deliver us from him. When they shall be gone we can place on the throne him who most deserves it."

The majority of those who listened applauded, and their treachery exhibits the weakness of Visigothic Spain—the rule of a king dependent on the goodwill of those who coveted the throne they had granted him. Other than the nobles he had no hope, so that, when he left his litter and mounted his milk-white horse Orelia by the banks of the river Guadalete, Rodrigo was already a doomed man. As he saw the hosts of Tarik approaching, and recognised the brown-skinned, shaggy-haired horsemen with the sunshine gleaming on their curved swords and long spears, he himself cried aloud in dismay:

"By the faith of the Messiah, these are the very men I saw painted in the House of Mystery at Toledo."

"That is the Christian King," said Tarik to his horsemen. "Behold the enemy in front, the sea at your back! By Allah, there is no salvation for you save in your courage and perseverance."



Then he set spurs to his horse, and Rodrigo did the like on his side, and inspired by their leaders the rival armies moved to the attack. At first the Christians held their own; but at a critical moment the sons of Wittiza and Bishop Oppas drew away from the fight—some legends even say they joined the Moors—and so decided the fortune of the day in favour of the Infidel.

“This was no common conflict,” wrote the Berber proudly, recounting his victory to Musa, his chief. “It was like the gathering of the tribes at the Day of Judgment.”

The victory of Guadalete may indeed be reckoned as one of the great battles of the world, for it decided a nation's fate. The Moors, who pursued the scattered bands of Goths, could meet with little effective resistance from the selfish, disunited nobles, and these for the most part left their lands and tenants to their fate and fled to the northern mountains of Asturias. The rest, the citizen overburdened with taxes, and the oppressed serf or slave, found in their new masters a type of ruler so much kindlier than the old that many abjured their faith and earned freedom by professing Islam. Others, remaining Christian, and despising their weaker brethren as “renegades,” settled down more or less contentedly to life as a subject race. In time their descendants came to form part of the great Mahometan Empire of the West, the Caliphate of Cordova, as luxurious as the Gothic Kingdom it replaced, but far superior in culture and practical knowledge.

Of the fate of Rodrigo it is impossible to glean any trustworthy account. According to some Arab chroniclers, he fell in the battle itself beneath the spear

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of Tarik. Others say he was drowned in the Guadalete, his steed, Orelia, being found dead on the bank, and beside her a royal sandal studded with precious stones. Yet a third account records that the Christian King escaped to Portugal and died there, since years later a tomb was discovered at Viseo inscribed with the words in Latin:

“Here reposeth Rodrigo, the last King of the Goths.”

## CHAPTER II

### *THE HAWK OF KOREYSH*

THIS chapter has as its hero not a Spaniard by birth but a Syrian, Abd-Er-Rahmān, "Son-of-the-Merciful-God," a prince of the Mahometan House of Omayya, that had reigned at Damascus for a hundred years and more. Against this line of rulers there rose in rebellion, in the year 750 A.D., Es-Saffāh, "The Butcher," proud of his descent from Abbas, uncle of the Prophet, and having gained the victory, seized Abd-Er-Rahmān's grandfather, the Caliph Hishām, cut off a hand and foot, and sent him thus mutilated, seated on an ass, through the towns of Syria, with a herald chanting before him in derision:

"Behold the illustrious lord of the House of Omayya!"

This act was the signal for a general massacre of the unfortunate prisoner's family; but Abd-Er-Rahmān, whom Es-Saffāh pursued with peculiar hatred because of a popular saying that he would one day avenge his House, succeeded in eluding his enemies and hid with his younger brother and small son in a village on the banks of the Euphrates.

Here, as he lay one day at noon within the house, shading his eyes from the glare that pained them, the child who played outside rushed into the room, screaming and gesticulating.

"What aileth thee? What hath frightened thee?"

cried his father, and, unable to calm the boy, went himself to the door. There on the outskirts of the scattered tents he saw the black banners of the House of Abbas, and the leader of the troop that bore them questioning the villagers.

Catching up the child, Abd-Er-Rahmān called to his brother, and together they ran down the steep bank at their feet and plunged into the river. The current was fierce, and the younger prince, who was only fourteen, was almost swept away as he lost his foothold.

"I cannot swim further," he cried, "I must return."

And the warriors of Es-Saffāh, now gathered on the bank, called to him:

"Come back! Be not afraid! Our master will spare your lives."

"Trust them not, but struggle still," gasped Abd-Er-Rahmān; and though burdened with his son, turned to give his brother aid, but the lad was already swimming in his panic to the shore from which he had come.

As the prince climbed up the opposite bank, safe for the moment, he saw his younger brother a prisoner, held down between two Syrian troopers, and then amid shouts of savage triumph the boy's head severed from his shoulders and raised aloft on spears. From that moment he knew there was no peace to be made with the House of Abbas, and vowing vengeance, set out to seek his fortunes like a prince in a fairy-tale, penniless and alone, save for his son and a faithful servant, Badr, who contrived to join him in hiding.

The chroniclers tell us that at this time Abd-Er-Rahmān was tall and slender, with high cheek-bones and reddish hair that he wore parted in two long curls. He



was blind in one eye, but strong and supple, and full of energy and ambition. From infancy he had heard the old women of his tribe prophesy his future greatness, and believing, like most Syrians, in the unalterable decisions of fate, never dreamed, even as a poor refugee, but that he would one day find a home and glory.

The Governor of Egypt, hoping to establish his own independence, had refused to recognise Es-Saffāh, in spite of his victories, as Caliph, or ruler of the entire Mahometan world. Indeed, he had offered a welcome to all the exiled Omayyads, but when the young prince Abd-Er-Rahmān appeared at his Court, he looked at him with suspicion, since a Jewish soothsayer had told him that a descendant of the royal family, wearing his hair in two long ringlets, would one day make himself master of North Africa.

“Behold, this is the man!” he said to the Jew. “But it matters not, you will see he will not deprive me of my province, for ere long he will be assassinated.”

The Jew, who looked favourably on the royal refugee, answered:

“My lord, the case stands thus . . . either Abd-Er-Rahmān is not the man, and if thou dost slay him thou wilt commit a useless crime, or he is in truth the predestined ruler of Africa, and no power of thine can deprive him of life, since destiny is unchangeable. . . . Bethink thee well what thou doest!”

The Governor, frightened of pitting himself against fate, held his hand for a time, and meanwhile Abd-Er-Rahmān received a secret warning of the

possible danger in which he stood, and one night stole away from Court. Hurrying westward, he found protection amid the wild Berber tribes who lived on the edge of the Sahara Desert, and these told him of the wonderful kingdom of Andalus across the seas, and of how it had been conquered by Tarik and was now the prey of rival chiefs, tributaries in name of Caliphs of Damascus, but since Es-Saffāh's rebellion, practically independent.

Their immediate over-lord was Yusuf, the aged "Emir," or governor of Spain, but because of a six years' famine he was hated by nearly all his subjects, while he was despised by exiled followers of the House of Omayya who had settled in large numbers near the towns of Jaen and Elvira.

To these Abd-Er-Rahmān sent his servant, Badr, addressing them like a prince his loyal subjects. . . .

"It is amongst you I would dwell, for I know ye would prove my faithful friends. . . . Have not I, grandson of the Caliph Hishām, a right to the Emirate of all Spain?"

So ran his message . . . and Badr bore it away across the seas, while his master sat by the camp fires of the Berber tribesmen and anxiously awaited the response.

The days passed and Badr travelled from one side of Spain to the other, bribing, cajoling, threatening; and then at last his sails reappeared off the African coast, and before the anchor could be dropped he had leaped overboard and was swimming to the shore.

"Good tidings!" he cried. "Behold, good tidings!"

Badr had brought with him not only five hundred pieces of gold and many promises of support, but a

number of influential Spanish Mahometans, among them one, whose name, "Father-of-the-Victorious," struck the superstitious Syrian as of good omen for his cause.

"Allah is great! Surely now we shall indeed be victorious," he exclaimed, and in his enthusiasm at once boarded the vessel and ordered the sails to be set for Andalus.

Yusuf, "Old Bald-pate," as his subjects irreverently nicknamed him, was at Toledo when the young prince landed, mourning over a defeat his armies had just suffered in Northern Spain at the hands of the Christian Basques.

"Put away your gloom," urged his courtiers. "Eat and be merry! What is the loss of a single battle? You have founded a dynasty that will endure till the Day of Judgment."

Yusuf shook his head and bade them be silent, and even as he sat on his divan, huddled in apprehension of he knew not what fresh blow of fate, a messenger came riding fast from Cordova. In his hand was a letter that told of the landing of Abd-Er-Rahmān, grandson of the Caliph Hishām, and of how he had taken to himself the title of Emir of all Spain.

At first Yusuf determined to march at once against the adventurer, but the suggestion awoke grumbling amongst the warriors in his camp who had but lately returned from Northern Spain and now found themselves called to take the road again.

"They will have us reckon two campaigns as one, and we refuse," declared some of the captains sulkily, while others said:

"Winter is approaching and the rivers are in

flood. . . . Who, under these conditions, could fight well or successfully?"

The old Governor, hesitating between the fear of losing his throne and of angering those on whom his success depended, at last sent a messenger to Abd-Er-Rahmān, bearing with him presents of horses, mules, rich apparel, slaves, and a thousand pieces of gold. These, he declared, were tokens of his master's goodwill, for Yusuf offered the prince his daughter in marriage and the lands in Spain that had belonged to his grandfather, the Caliph Hishām, if only he would publicly renounce his claim to the Emirate.

Abd-Er-Rahmān pretended that he would do as his supporters wished on the matter of this embassy, but secretly he was delighted when a quarrel broke out between one of the Omayyad chiefs and the messenger who had come with the gifts, a quarrel so violent that all thoughts of arbitration were brought temporarily to an end. The prince had set his heart on nothing less than the prospect of making himself ruler of all Spain; and so, as soon as the winter was over and the roads had somewhat dried, he set out from Cordova to win his kingdom in good earnest. Yusuf, on his side, marched from Seville, and the two armies watched one another across the Guadalquivir, whose waters were still swollen by the heavy rains.

Now the Omayyad prince, though he was brave and could be generous on occasion, had many characteristics that the modern world has learned to despise. When thwarted or inspired by the instinct of revenge he was cruel as Es-Saffāh, "the Butcher," and utterly treacherous if he saw the opportunity of thereby gaining for himself some small advantage.



Knowing that the aged Yusuf was still anxious for an amicable settlement of their rivalry, he now pretended that he was of the same mind, and that if only he might cross the river in peace he would begin negotiations at once.

“Cross in peace! I will not stay thee,” answered the Emir, and when he heard that Abd-Er-Rahmān’s troops were hungry and without food, he sent them sheep and corn and wine.

The Omayyad army feasted and made merry, but quietly it prepared its weapons and crossed the river, and in the morning Yusuf saw it drawn up in battle-order and knew that he had been tricked. Now he must fight whether he wished or not, and so he also arrayed his forces, and advanced with as bold a blare of trumpets as he could muster.

There is a tale that just before the two armies met in shock of battle Abd-Er-Rahmān rode between his ranks mounted on a swift charger, and at the sight some of his warriors, knowing his treacherous nature, made mock.

“Our youthful general,” they said, “is mounted on so sure a steed the better to flee if there be any disaster.”

Overhearing this sneering comment, the Prince, who knew the issue of the day depended on the personal enthusiasm he could arouse, turned to one of the worst grumblers.

“This horse of mine has a trick of rearing,” he exclaimed. “I wish to make an exchange, so give me that excellent and quiet mule of thine.”

The man did so, ashamed of his previous suspicions; and everywhere that day was Abd-Er-Rahmān to be

seen on his grey mule where the fight was thickest, until evening proclaimed his triumph and Yusuf and his courtiers had fled in dismay.

By his victory the prince-adventurer made himself master of Spain, and fulfilled the prophecies uttered at his birth as to his future greatness, for more than any Mahometan ruler before him he exercised his sovereign rights over the peninsula. Marvellous in beauty of line and in luxury was the palace he built in his capital of Cordova, and to its marble baths he brought fresh water from the mountains across a mighty aqueduct, while he planted a garden with peaches and pomegranates and palms from the East to remind him of his Syrian home. A mosque also he built, and bridges, surrounding the whole city with a strong wall, and within this fastness he stationed a permanent body-guard picked from among the forty thousand Berber mercenaries he had hired to fight his battles.

Now, if at any time in his career, it would seem that he might have rested and enjoyed what he had won; but in truth the throne Abd-Er-Rahmān had gained by fraud and violence he was only to keep by the continued use of these same weapons, and a watchfulness that could leave him little peace of mind.

Enemies within Spain he would always find among the Mahometan chieftains, whose jealousy his upstart greatness had aroused, but these petty rivals, acting each on their own initiative, he did not fear. It was when he realised they were employed as the tools of a still greater power, the Abbaside Caliphate in Syria, he knew that all his ingenuity and courage would be required to free himself from the web in which they would enmesh him.

To the new Caliph Al-Mansur as to Es-Saffāh of old an Omayyad prince was always an enemy, his triumphs, even in distant Spain, a possible stepping-stone to the reconquest of the East. Thus it was that agents and spies of the Black Banner fomented perpetual trouble within the kingdom of Andalus, until at last they were able to effect a rebellion in conjunction with the landing of a Syrian general, Ala, sent by Al-Mansur himself, with troops and money.

Now, as never before, Abd-Er-Rahmān understood his power was to be put to the test, and, as he rode forth from Seville to give battle to the invader, he halted his warriors almost on the threshold of the city.

"Comrades," he cried aloud, "to-day we must conquer or die. Let us throw the scabbard of our swords into the flames and swear to fall like soldiers if the victory may not be ours."

A shout of enthusiasm answered his words as the men guessed his determination and echoed it. Cheerfully they cast away their scabbards, and, when at last they met the enemy, they charged so impetuously that none could withstand the onslaught. Over seven thousand Abbasides, the chroniclers tell us, perished that day; and Abd-Er-Rahmān, filled with savage joy at his victory, ordered the heads of the conquered chieftains to be severed from their bodies and preserved in a mixture of salt and camphor. To the ear of each was affixed their name and title, and then these hideous trophies were placed in a closed basket and carried by a travelling merchant to the East, who left it by night in the market-place of Bagdad, whither the Caliphs had removed their capital.

Great was the wrath and dismay of Al Mansur when the basket was brought into his presence and opened.

"Praise be to Allah!" he ejaculated fervently, "that He hath placed the sea between this fellow and me." And in his wonder at the haughty implacability of his rival, he nicknamed him "The Hawk of Koreysh," that is, a hawk for his swift conquest of his prey, and of the Prophet's own tribe of "Koreysh."

Little more successful than Al Mansur was his ally, the redoubtable Charlemagne, hero of Christendom, when, at the Caliph's request, he crossed the Pyrenees with his "Paladins" to try his fortunes against the Omayyad Emir. The story is told (strictly from the Frankish point of view) in that wonderful epic, the "*Chanson de Roland*," or "*Song of Roland*," written some two centuries after the events it purports to describe, and, therefore, to be studied rather as a legend bred of Christian imagination than as a record of actual facts.

This much seems certain, that the great Charles consented to cross the Pyrenees and march on Cordova on the promise of assistance from certain Mahometan Governors in the north of the peninsula who were jealous of Abd-Er-Rahmān's power. Like many a mediaeval alliance the combination came to naught, for the Mahometans fell out amongst themselves long before their ally appeared on the scenes; while the Christian tribes of the north, instead of welcoming those of their own faith, gathered their forces under the leadership of the renowned Bernardo del Carpio, and fell with fury upon the Franks, whom they regarded as foreign invaders.

Retreating before vastly-superior numbers, the



Franks recrossed the mountains, protected by their rear-guard, that perished to a man in the heroic task of holding the narrow Pass of Roncesvalles. Here fell Roland, lord of the Breton Marches, and Oliver his friend, brothers-in-arms and peerless knights, after incredible deeds of valour; and the "Chanson de Roland" recounts how Charlemagne, hearing the trumpet call of his dying paladins, returned in haste to inflict a terrible vengeance on those who had killed the best and bravest amongst his warriors.

In a very different strain wrote the exultant Spanish ballad-monger. . . .

"The Day of Roncesvalles was a dismal day for you,  
Ye men of France, for there the lance of King Charles was  
broken in two.  
Ye well may curse that rueful field, for many a noble peer  
In fray or fight the dust did bite beneath Bernardo's spear."

The Battle of Roncesvalles, largely gained by Christian valour, saved Spain from further French aggression; but the fruits of the victory were reaped by Abd-Er-Rahmān, who took advantage of the campaign to capture the town of Saragossa and attack the Christian Basques in their own strongholds, while their principal warriors were fighting elsewhere.

Henceforth the Emir's claim to his kingdom was almost undisputed, but the dominion on which he had set his heart as a young man did not bring him happiness in old age. Some said he sorrowed over his past cruelties, and above all for his neglect of his faithful servant, Badr, whom he had allowed to die in poverty, for the chroniclers tell us he was by nature "kind-hearted and well disposed to mercy." He liked to visit the sick and make gifts, and in the early part

of his reign would wander unattended through the streets of Cordova, listening to the talk of the populace and bestowing alms on beggars.

While on one of these expeditions he was annoyed, however, by an old man who caught hold of his white robe, refusing to let go until the petition he had made had been granted. This importunity so offended Abd-Er-Rahmān that he withdrew into his palace, surrounding himself henceforth like an Eastern sultan with a retinue of officials and courtiers.

There in his splendid isolation he sat by a window and gazed on a palm tree that had been brought from Syria by his orders and planted in the courtyard.

"Thou art like me," he cried one day as he gazed upon it, "for thou resemblest me in wandering and journeying and the long separation from relatives and friends. . . .

"Thou also didst grow in a foreign soil, and like me art far away from the country of thy birth. . . .

"May the fertilising clouds of morning water thee in exile! May the beneficent rains, which the poor implore, never forsake thee!"

These words are full of bitter home-sickness, and show that Abd-Er-Rahmān, the first of the great Emirs of Spain, was never a Spaniard at heart, but always a Syrian exile.

He died in the year 788, after a reign of thirty-five years, leaving the kingdom to his son, and a memory of great courage, tenacity and splendour.

"Never once," says an Arab chronicler, "did he unfurl his banner against his enemies that he did not return victorious from the field of battle."

It is a fitting epitaph for "The Hawk of Koreysh."

## CHAPTER III

### *ALMANZOR, THE STORY OF A CLIMBER*

ABD-ER-RAHMĀN I. had planned a Cordova of palaces and gardens, the capital of a kingdom that, both in its tropical luxuriance of fruit and flowers and in the architecture of its cities and villages, should surpass Damascus and Bagdad. We have seen that he died unsatisfied, an exile mourning for his Eastern home.

Some two hundred years later, however, the dream of this Syrian Emir became a reality, and his descendants reigned as Caliphs over a kingdom whose once Oriental graft now bore truly Spanish fruit.

Spain of the Moors! For those who have trodden the fairy palaces of the Alhambra and the winding streets of Seville and Cordova, the name may well conjure Arabian Night visions; but even for the less fortunate, who have merely dipped into chronicle and legend, romance lies on every page.

Statistics are usually dull, but to read that Cordova in the first half of the tenth century stretched for twenty-four miles along the Guadalquivir and possessed twenty-one suburbs, over one hundred and thirteen thousand houses, exclusive of palaces, over eighty thousand shops, seven hundred mosques, nine hundred public baths, and four thousand three hundred markets, is not to picture a miniature London, with dreary box-shaped mansions set down with military precision, and at that apparition to stifle a yawn and turn the page.

No advertiser, however bold, could bestow on Kensington or Balham such epithets as "The Vale of Paradise," "The Beautiful Valley," "The Path of Roses," "The Garden of Wonders"; names that well became the Cordovan suburbs, with their stone palaces adorned with marble and alabaster, glistening white in the southern sun, with their gardens, enclosed by clipped hedges of myrtle, box and laurel, scented with roses and sweet-smelling shrubs, shaded by palms, and cool with the splash of fountains in massive silver basins and the quiet of lakes and sheltered bowers.

Beyond the suburbs stretched miles of fruit and olive orchards away to the rocky hillsides, cut in terraces and planted with mould, to give sunshine and nourishment to the vines. Before all things the Moor was a gardener; and while Saxon, Norman, Frank and Slav laid waste the soil of Europe, he experimented in artificial manures, forestry and irrigation. By his industry Granada was intersected with a network of canals, the barren steppes of Old Castile planted with trees, and La Mancha transformed into a field of golden corn.

From east to west and north to south ran broad highways connecting the outposts of the Caliphate with the capital, and culminating in seven huge gates, covered with scales of brass that burned and glittered in the sun. Within, was the contrast of cool, winding streets shaded during the day by awnings hung from house to house and lit at night for ten miles along the principal thoroughfare by a thousand lamps. All these narrow roads were well paved and drained, and back in the dark recesses formed by roof and awning



opened out the markets, with their merchants and vendors offering their wares in every tongue.

Here could the wealthy traveller purchase jewels and perfumes, priceless manuscripts filched from Greece and Arabia, silken stuffs and robes woven of gold and silver thread, Christian slaves captured in battle or Egyptians and Abyssinians imported from the East.

Everywhere was the same pervading atmosphere of ease and luxury, never more sacredly maintained than in Medina-al-Zahra, Medina "the Blossom," once a summer villa for Cordovan rulers, but now a permanent royal suburb of palaces and gardens on the banks of the Guadalquivir, occupied only by the Caliph and his Court, and guarded by its frowning "Alcazar" or fortress, standing at the head of the old Roman bridge across the river.

Within these walls, Hakam II, "most virtuous and liberal of men," a descendant of "The Hawk of Koreysh," reigned from 961-976, bestowing what time he could spare from the affairs of his kingdom on the four hundred thousand precious manuscripts that he had gathered together in his library.

Culture and education were to this Caliph what conquest or self-indulgence had been to many another; and we are told that during his reign nearly everyone in Andalusia was able to read and write, while the fame of the University of Cordova, that he had encouraged and supported, drew students of theology, medicine and philosophy from all over the civilised world.

Amongst the young students of the University at this time was a certain Ibn-Abu-Amir, proud of his

descent from an Arabian follower of that adventurer, Tarik the Berber, but himself the son of a lawyer, and intended by his family for an official rather than a military career.

Handsome, supple and imaginative in mind, steeped in the chronicles of his race and above all in the histories of such men as had climbed to fame from insignificance, the young Cordovan soon gathered round him a group of friends, impressed by his eloquence and ambitions, yet often a little amused by the seriousness with which he regarded his own abilities.

One evening, as he and four of his companions sat late over their supper beneath a tree in a garden on the outskirts of Cordova, discussing Heaven and Earth after the manner of students, Ibn-Abu-Amir emphasised his opinions by adding :

“Take heed to my words, for I shall one day be ruler of this country.”

Laughter and pleasantries greeted this remark, at which, rising abruptly, he continued with some haughtiness :

“Name each of you the office you desire and I will confer it upon you when I obtain my power.”

The other four looked at each other sheepishly, but the conviction of the speaker forced them to answer.

“I would be Inspector of Markets,” exclaimed one youth, winking at the rest. “There is money in that office I have always heard.”

“And I Governor of Malaga, for I dote on figs.”

“And I Prefect of the City, for I love its gardens.”

The fourth only shrugged, and then, as Ibn-Abu-Amir’s dark eyes challenged his silence, laughed contemptuously.

"Thou sorry braggart. When thou governest Spain let me be smeared with honey to attract bees and gadflies, and thus, seated on a jackass with my face to the tail, be led through the streets of Cordova."

"So be it!" answered the other tranquilly. "Each of you shall gain his wish," and, leaving the supper party to laugh at his pretensions if they wished, he returned home to spend the night poring over his books.

A University does not always reward its brilliant young men with exalted posts, and Ibn-Abu-Amir, at the end of his student's career, found no better occupation than a desk at the Palace gate, where he translated into the language of etiquette the rude petitions laid before their sovereign by the poor of Cordova.

While engaged on this task he attracted the attention of the Governor of the City as he came and went to and from royal audiences. A man of mediocre abilities himself, the Governor saw at first sight in this quick-witted, smooth-tongued youth just the sort of deputy he needed to sit on the city tribunals and express his own sentiments, only with more subtle force and knowledge. Ibn-Abu-Amir was nothing loath, but he quickly proved altogether too efficient for his new master, who, alarmed by his brains and ambitions, determined to shift the responsibility of using them elsewhere. He, therefore, recommended the young man to the Sultana Sobeyra, "the Dawn," Hakam II's favourite wife, assuring her that here was a most suitable agent to manage the lands and property of her five-year-old son, the heir to the throne.

The Sultana thereupon sent for Ibn-Abu-Amir, who speedily charmed her, as he had the Governor, by his

handsome face and suave manners. Agent to the young prince he became, but by assiduous deference to the Sultana's tastes and wishes he soon mounted a step higher on the ladder of fame and was appointed, to the anger of other Court climbers, "Master of the Mint."

Tales were brought to the Caliph ere long of the new financier's extravagance. Here was a young man with next to no money of his own who could make the Sultana a gift of a wonderful model of the palace moulded in silver. Besides this perhaps excusable thank-offering to his patroness, there had been many loans and much unnecessary generosity. Had not a worthless gambler, a noble reduced to a bridle ornamented with silver as almost his last possession, brought it to the Mint and received in return not merely the weight of the silver but of the whole bridle, and a cloak full of coins as well?

The sequel of this tale was worse, Court gossip hinted, for the noble, with more gratitude than discretion, was said to have exclaimed as he left the presence of Ibn-Abu-Amir, rejoicing:

"I love this man. Were he to ask me to rebel against my sovereign, I believe I should not hesitate to obey him."

Hakam II was too well aware of the intrigues by which he was surrounded to be alarmed by stories whose root lay obviously in the jealousy of the unsuccessful, but he admitted that it was high time to audit the new Master of the Mint's accounts; and to this end suddenly demanded a reckoning of the royal treasure.

Here was the moment for which the jealous and



discontented had been long waiting; but Ibn-Abu-Amir, warned by the Sultana, emerged triumphant from the ordeal. Not for nothing had he made loans and gifts, since now in secret he received them back with interest from those who wished anything rather than the downfall of this generous young man. The balance-sheet of the Master of the Mint proved perfectly clear and satisfactory, to all appearance such a shining example of public honesty that Hakam II made it plain that the young official acted henceforward as his trusted servant as well as the Sultana's. Thus Ibn-Abu-Amir put to silence his enemies and increased the number of his powerful friends.

In 976, according to Christian reckoning, Hakam II died, in the arms of his most trusted slaves, Fayik, Keeper of the Wardrobe, and Jaudhar, the Grand Falconer. To them belonged the real control of the royal bodyguard of foreign troops that dominated both palace and city; and, counting on this power as they looked at one another across the Caliph's corpse, they made a vow that the new sovereign should be a man of their own choice.

Many a time had they sworn to Hakam that they would be faithful to his young son, Hisham, a lad of twelve, but Hakam was dead, and since Hisham lived under the influence of the Vizier Mushafy, who disliked the Grand Falconer and Keeper of the Wardrobe, these oaths and promises they were now prepared to retract. Instead they plotted to proclaim Prince Mughira, the late Caliph's brother, since they believed that he would be so grateful for their nomination and support that he would be willing to act as their tool. Unfortunately for their plan they were forced to confide their intention

to Mushafy, as the principal Court official, but they trusted that they would be able to overawe him with the threat of summoning the bodyguard to carry out their wishes, and so indeed it seemed.

The Vizier, when they complained it was bad for a kingdom to be ruled by a child, at once pretended to agree with them; but secretly he sent for his partisans, amongst whom was the young Ibn-Abu-Amir, and with a long face told them what had happened.

"If Mughira supplants Hisham," he wailed, "we shall lose our offices and perhaps our lives, for the Prince hates us. . . . Yet these villains can rely on the royal bodyguard. . . . What shall we do?"

No one answered save Ibn-Abu-Amir with his usual assurance:

"Give me a band of men whom I can trust and I will arrest, and, if necessary, slay Mughira."

The plan was so daring that it actually overreached the calculations of Fayik and Jaudhar, to whom the prince was a mere pawn on their chess-board, awaiting their pleasure. Thus, while they cautiously made sure of the palace, and, as they thought, of Mushafy, Ibn-Abu-Amir rode at full speed to the house of the prince, whom they intended to proclaim, arrested him, still ignorant of the news of his brother's death, and, in spite of his protestations of loyalty to his nephew, had him strangled.

With Prince Mughira died the plot that had centred round his name. There was now no possible rival to the young Hisham, whose hand Fayik and Jaudhar sullenly kissed in token of a submission that sealed their own downfall.

When the new Caliph passed through the streets to

receive the greetings of his citizens, Mushafy, now "Hajib," or Prime Minister, rode at his right hand, and a pace or two behind Ibn-Abu-Amir, a Vizier on the recommendation of the Sultana.

It is a commonplace that climbers kick away the ladders by which they ascend, and the saying is certainly true of Ibn-Abu-Amir. To Mushafy, narrow-minded, arrogant, close-fisted, and, therefore, by no means a popular figure in Court or country, the young Vizier seemed merely a courtier whom he had successfully used to meet a crisis. That Ibn-Abu-Amir had in reality used him and would continue to do so only as long as he could be of any service was a suggestion that at this time would have left him gasping with wrath and incredulity.

Several years elapsed before the "Hajib" discovered that for taxes he had unwillingly remitted his Vizier, through diligent propaganda, had gained the credit, that the royal bodyguard, deprived of Fayik's and Jaudhar's influence, had been bribed into becoming that same Vizier's personal corps, while in the provinces also this upstart minister had been at work, visiting the frontiers ostensibly on delicate missions from the Central Government, but far more bent on private negotiations to his own advantage.

Ibn-Abu-Amir had received no training in the art of war, but some of the blood of his fighting ancestors burned in his veins. Transplanted from Court to camp he was at once at home, listening with deference and sympathy to the generals on whom he had been sent to spy, gaining their confidence by the enthusiasm with which he joined them on marauding expeditions into Christian territory and the generosity with which he distributed his share of the spoils.

Any unpleasantness between Headquarters and the Army at the Front he quickly made them understand was not of his brewing: he would at all times favour their ambitions as far as he was able. Thus, having impressed his value on generals and soldiers alike, he returned to Court a military hero, crowned by the dispatches that he carried with half the laurels of a successful campaign.

Mushafy had a civilian's dislike of camps and soldiers, and for a long time encouraged these military missions since he lazily believed that his energetic Vizier was trying to heal the frequent misunderstandings that arose between the Government and Ghalib, the Commander-in-Chief and darling of the army. Too late it dawned on him that there was deliberate treachery afoot with "this fox," as he now called his Vizier, setting the snares instead of clearing them away. In a panic he wrote privately to Ghalib, denouncing Ibn-Abu-Amir, protesting his friendship, and offering as a mark of his good faith that his son and heir should become suitor to the Commander-in-Chief's daughter.

Ghalib wavered. After all a Prime Minister's son was not to be despised; but the Vizier's silver tongue proved to him instead that Mushafy was nothing but a dead dog where political influence was concerned. Prime Ministers rose from the dust and might as speedily return there. Thus the dispatches that the "Hajib" expected to contain his son's marriage contract announced briefly that Ghalib had already given his daughter as a bride to Ibn-Abu-Amir.

If this news had not shown decisively which way the wind was blowing, his ante-chambers, usually so



thronged with petitioners and servile courtiers but now deserted, would have proclaimed to the old man his fallen fortunes.

"I have waited this moment for years," he exclaimed when arrested a few days later on a charge of appropriating public funds. . . . "Now is the dread prayer answered."

"What prayer?" asked those whom curiosity had brought to view the humbling of the proud.

Then Mushafy, his arrogance slipped away like a garment, told them how long years before, when acting as judge, he had from personal spite condemned an innocent man to forfeiture of his goods and imprisonment in a dungeon. To his annoyance he could not free his mind from his false dealing, though hating the prisoner he in no way repented his sin. At night as he slept he would hear a voice, clear and loud, saying incisively:

"Set that man free, for I have heard his prayer, and one day shall his fate be thine."

Mushafy, alarmed at this warning from heaven, sent for the prisoner and bade him go free, begging his pardon, but the fellow answered him roughly:

"I will not give it thee."

"Tell me at least," said his judge, failing to soften him, "in prison didst thou make supplication to the Eternal concerning me?"

"Aye!" answered the other. "I prayed God that thou shouldst die in a dungeon as strait as that in which I myself have languished."

But Mushafy was not destined to die at once.

"Would to God that I could purchase death, but He hath put too high a price upon it," was his bitter lament,

as he found himself dragged to prison first on one charge and then on another, as often as he was released after paying heavy fines to his judges.

Lower and lower he sank into shame and poverty, dragging his family with him, until at last he was reduced to begging his bread from the rival who had betrayed him, and who now looked on him with scorn or indifference.

"Lately lions were afraid of me," said the old man, "but now I tremble at a fox."

After five years of misery, to him infinitely prolonged beyond that span, the end came.

"We carried the bier to the grave," wrote a Cordovan, who remembered waiting for hours some years before in a vain attempt to reach the "Hajib" with a petition, "and were followed only by the 'Imam' (priest) of the Mosque, whom we had requested to recite the prayers for the dead. No passer-by dared to glance at the corpse. . . . As I mused on changing fortune a profound melancholy oppressed my bosom."

On the day the old "Hajib" fell from power Ibn-Abu-Amir succeeded to his office and steadily absorbed all the authority of the civil government. Ruler of Cordova, he crucified, imprisoned, or banished all who dared to criticise his actions.

Only towards the general public, with its easily-aroused emotions whether of loyalty, hate, or religious fanaticism, did he show any deference, clearing himself of a charge of free-thinking by allowing some of the more rigid Mahometan priests a free hand in the library of Hakam II. The burning of many priceless manuscripts, condemned as heretical, convinced

Cordova of the new minister's devotion to the faith, while his generosity and the royal state that he maintained served to impress their minds with a constant sense of his dignity and power.

Gradually, whether in courts-of-law, at State receptions, or in public announcements, the name of the young Caliph, hitherto bracketed with that of Ibn-Abu-Amir, was omitted. Hisham II, it was explained, was possessed of a very spiritual nature. Solely in order that he might have leisure to lead a religious life, had his faithful Prime Minister undertaken the entire cares of State.

Court gossip, whispering in corners where it dared, told another tale . . . that long ago, for their own ends, the Sultana and the Vizier she had created had deliberately undermined the young Caliph's health and spirit, keeping him a prisoner, simple in mind and shut off from all knowledge of that world of realities in which he should have moved, a master of men.

Whatever the cause, Hisham, a precocious boy, grew into a weak and indolent man, so submissive that he would consent, when leaving the palace for the outer world, to muffle himself in a woman's dress that his people might not recognise him and offer the loyal applause that Ibn-Abu-Amir coveted jealously for himself.

Once only did the royal youth prepare to assert himself, aroused by his mother, whose admiration for the smooth-spoken minister had changed by this time into fear and loathing. Secretly she plotted his downfall with Ziri, Viceroy of the province of Mauretania beyond the seas, and to this end dispatched to her ally by way of her private estates more than eighty thousand

pieces of money that she had stolen from the treasury and concealed in jars of honey. It was her idea that Ziri, once provided with sufficient funds, should land in Spain and march on Cordova, where the young Caliph, would, at her instigation, proclaim him the saviour of the throne from tyranny and denounce his minister.

Unfortunately for Sobeyra, foxes are not easily tricked. Ibn-Abu-Amir never trusted even his supposed friends, and it crossed his brain to wonder why the Sultana should suddenly export so many jars of honey and fruit. As soon as spies, by the accidental breaking of a jar, brought him word, he rode straight to the palace, demanded a private interview with the Caliph, and induced that timid youth, already alarmed by the leading part his mother expected him to play, to sign a document, acknowledging his own unfitness to govern and the complete worthiness of Ibn-Abu-Amir to act as his successor.

A few days later the Sultana retired an exile to her country estates.

One struggle for the completion of Ibn-Abu-Amir's ascendancy in the Caliphate of Cordova we have not yet mentioned: the casting aside of Ghalib, the Commander-in-Chief, to whose friendship the climber had largely owed his triumph over Mushafy.

Ghalib was a typical soldier of his day—brave, blunt, and self-important. Like the old "Hajib," he had believed for years in the apparently frank admiration of the man he had accepted as his son-in-law; so that, when at last he discovered the double intrigue between Court and army and his own ignominious share in the new government as servant rather than co-regent, his rage passed all bounds.

“Dog that thou art, thou dost claim supreme authority and schemest to overthrow the royal house.”

So he cried in anger, drawing his sword and rushing suddenly on his son-in-law, as they stood one day side by side on the roof of a tower, where they had met to discuss their differences of opinion in comparative privacy.

For almost the first time in his life Ibn-Abu-Amir was overcome with terror. No immediate help was at hand, and he knew that he could not stand up against the old man with any weapon of war. Choosing the lesser risk he sprang aside from the other's heavy thrust and leaped the battlements, catching at a projecting ledge some feet below. To this he clung, bruised and strained, until he was rescued by his servants and carried into safety.

Henceforward there was, of course, open warfare between Ibn-Abu-Amir and his father-in-law, a struggle in which fate, as usual in this adventurous life, decided in favour of the fox. During the crisis of a battle that was already turning in the direction of victory for Ghalib, the old man, leaning forward to avoid a blow, hit his head against the tall crest of his saddle and fell to the ground stunned. Overcome with dismay, those who had already counted on winning the day, fled from the field, and in the confusion their general's body was found later lying amongst the slain.

Triumphant over all his enemies at home Ibn-Abu-Amir now turned his attention to the complete subjection of his Christian foes, against whom he had already waged several successful campaigns, but of this final struggle we must treat in another chapter.



One more thing we will notice here, that the all-powerful ruler of Cordova chose to forget the name under which he had climbed to pre-eminence, and issued an edict that henceforth he should be known throughout the Caliphate by the title of "Almansur Billah," "Victorious by the help of God," or "Almanzor," as, in its shortened form, the name has been handed down in history.

## CHAPTER IV

### *SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELLA*

IN the western corner of Spain, just north of the modern Republic of Portugal, lies the province of Galicia, a region unlike the rest of the peninsula in its plentiful rainfall, deep rivers, and the sunny freshness of its green hills that recall our own wooded Devonshire.

To the Gallegans, as the men and women of the province are called, their country is the most beautiful part of the most beautiful land outside Paradise, and they have no difficulty in believing that when Christ bade His Apostles "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," St. James, the son of Zebedee, having visited Galicia in the course of his missionary journeys, could not bear the idea that he would never see it again. According to legend, he, therefore, desired his followers that, after his death, they should bring back his body and bury it near the town of Iria Flavia (the modern Padron) where he had preached and taught.

Now James, the son of Zebedee, was the first of the Apostles to be martyred, slain by Herod's orders but a few years after his Master's death; and the old Spanish tales of Sant Iago (or St. James) describe how his disciples, mindful of his entreaty, begged for his body and severed head and placed them in a coffin that they carried secretly by night to Joppa. Here they

hired a boat and set sail, moving as the wind and tide carried them until on the seventh day of their voyage they successfully passed between the dreaded Pillars of Hercules and veered due north along the Atlantic sea-board, casting anchor at length off the Galician coast.

To their surprise, as they prepared to enter the mouth of the river, the disciples saw a horseman, shining as the day, ride towards them through the waves, and then, before he reached the boat, sink from sight. Further trace of horse or rider there was none save that the small bay, before quite clear, now became crested with tiny scallop shells. Then the Judeans, at first puzzled and alarmed, realised that they had seen a vision, and giving God thanks took up each of them a shell as a sign of divine protection. In this way the scallop became the emblem of their master, St. James, and was carried by all those who in after years travelled to see his tomb.

The little boat, steering itself, now entered the mouth of the river and sped on its way until it came to a ford, where it halted by a big white stone that Spanish Christians afterwards called "El Padron," or "The Master," because of the precious coffin that had rested there. A crowd, of course, collected from the town of Iria Flavia on the hillside above, and as soon as it was known that there were strangers at the ford, Roman soldiers hastened to inform the Governor, but when he heard they had brought the body of the good missionary who had loved Galicia in his lifetime he bade them bury their master where they would.

Then they lifted the coffin and laid it on an ox-cart that someone had willingly lent, and everyone followed

behind in procession as the oxen, driven by some unseen hand, started forth up the hill-path and so across the countryside until they came to the garden of a villa, wherein was a temple to the two-headed god, Janus.

As in the old days of Dagon and the Ark so in Roman Spain, for the heathen image, as the coffin came in at the door borne by stalwart Judeans, fell to the ground and crumbled to pieces, but the Gallegans, rejoicing in the saint who had loved their province, were in no way annoyed. Instead they dedicated the temple to St. James, and built there an altar out of the white stone that lay at the ford, and set the altar in front of a sepulchre wonderfully carved and fashioned, inside which they placed the body of the saint that had at last found its final resting-place.

Round the temple, now a Christian chapel, grew up a small community of faithful worshippers who sent forth missionaries to teach their Gospel to the rest of Spain; but as the years passed the religious persecutions that swept the Roman Empire penetrated to Galicia, and the Christian population determined to hide all trace of their sacred relic lest it should be destroyed. They, therefore, covered the sepulchre and altar with rich soil, and in this they planted spreading bushes and trees that gradually hid the mound until all vestiges of the saint's tomb had disappeared. So it remained, lost and unknown to the world for nearly eight hundred years, while Romans were replaced by Goths and Goths defeated by Moors, and only a very small remnant of the Christian faith was left alive to hold the northern strongholds of Spain against the infidel.

According to legend, the leader of this heroic band was a certain Gothic noble, Pelayo, dauntless in courage as the exiled Abd-Er-Rahmān himself. This man gathered round him all those (and they were very few) who declared they would never bow their necks to the Moslem yoke, however hard and cheerless might be their fate, living in caves and holes in the rocks amongst the cold northern ranges.

Gallegans are inclined to believe that the majority of these heroes were Galician born, and that it was amongst the hills of their own province that the guerilla warfare was carried on that enabled Pelayo to maintain his independence, but actual history has determined the scene of conflict as the Asturian Mountains, where to-day every peasant considers himself of noble birth by reason of the great deeds of his ancestors.\*

Pelayo and his band cut off Moslem stragglers, set fire to their camps, and harassed their northern outposts, but to the vast army of invaders these Christian adventurers were at first no more than a swarm of gadflies, as annoying as they were difficult to pursue and punish.

“What are thirty or so barbarians perched on a rock? They must inevitably die if we leave them alone.”

So said Moorish commanders of this date, but with very short-sighted vision, according to the groans of later Arabic historians.

“Would to God that the Moslems had extinguished at once the sparks of a fire that was destined to consume the whole dominions of Islam in these parts.”

\* It may be noted in this connection that it is from Asturias and not from Galicia that the heir to the Spanish throne takes his title.



By the time the truth of these words was appreciated it was too late to accept them as practical advice. The descendants of Pelayo and his followers had multiplied and spread through all northern Spain, until gradually there emerged several small Spanish kingdoms, whose armies, if unable to drive back the Moors into Africa, could yet, by combining, form a Christian rampart in the north.

Amongst these states was the Kingdom of Leon that embraced the Province of Galicia, and to an old Gallegan anchorite, Pelagio, was vouchsafed in the year 812 a vision that enabled the Christians of the province to find the body of the Apostle so long hidden from Spanish eyes.

Kneeling at his prayers outside the door of his cave in a field near Iria Flavia, Pelagio saw one night a star clearer and more beautiful than any other in the heavens. It seemed to rest above a huge mound planted thickly with bushes and spreading trees, and Pelagio, as he advanced, could see strange lights moving amid the tangled undergrowth and hear mystic voices raised in solemn chant.

Making sure during several nights' careful observation that he had not been deceived by his senses, the anchorite at length went to Teodimiro, Bishop of Iria, and told him of his wonderful discovery. The news spread like wildfire through the town, and soon all the inhabitants who could run or walk were hurrying to the "Campus Stellae," or "Field of the Star," armed with spades or other implements.

Quickly the trees were cut down, and the bushes and the mound dug away, until the sepulchre of the saint stood revealed, white and shining. Within it was

the coffin containing the body and severed head, and a letter declaring:—"Here lies Santiago, the son of Zebedee . . . brother of St. John . . . slain by Herod," and a description of how he came to be buried there, as we have just described.

Teodimiro was a joyful man when he read this letter, and so was Alfonso, King of Leon, who, as soon as he heard the report of Pelagio's discovery, came riding as hard as he could from Asturias to give God thanks along with his good bishop. Here, they both felt, within the bishopric of the one and the kingdom of the other was a centre of faith and hope established that might become a source of inspiration to Christian endeavour and a rallying point for Spanish armies.

Iria Flavia had been a town well established since Roman times, but now its name disappeared, and instead a city and church grew up around the sepulchre in Galicia called Santiago de Compostella," or "St. James of the Field of the Star"; and to it came pilgrims not only from every part of Christian Spain but from all over Europe, wearing in their hats the cockle-shells that the Apostle's disciples, according to the legend, had taken off the seashore as their emblem.

Many were the valuable gifts that these worshippers brought, and the sums of money that the bishop and his successors received were spent in carving and decorating the church, and in casting golden bells that could be heard all over the countryside.

Reports of the shrine and its sacredness in Christian eyes of course reached the Moslem Court, and Ibn-Abu-Amir, hearing them, determined with his usual audacity to carry his victorious banners not merely across the borders of Leon as hitherto but through the

gates of Santiago de Compostella itself. If he were to achieve triumph in such an enterprise, no Moor, he felt, however jealous of his rapid ascent to power, could deny him the title of "Almanzor" that he had claimed, for he would, indeed, under Allah's inspiration, be Conqueror of all Spain.

In picking a quarrel on which to found his enterprise there was no difficulty. War against "dogs of unbelievers" came at all times to the Moslems with the appeal of a crusade, but as an incentive to his own vengeance Almanzor could always recall how Christian forces had supported the Commander-in-Chief Ghalib in his revolt.

At that time, taking advantage of the paralysis of fear caused amongst his following by the old commander's death, the victorious Prime Minister had straightway invaded the Kingdom of Leon, burning all the land in the neighbourhood of the Fortress of Zamora, including, it was said, over a thousand villages and hamlets.

This challenge had been as instantly accepted as given, and Ramiro III of Leon, joining forces with the King of Navarre, had marched south and met the Moslem army in a terrific conflict that seemed at first as if it would end in Christian victory. Ibn-Abu-Amir, watching from the platform whose erection he had ordered that he might better view his customary triumph, gnashed his teeth in rage; and at last, with a cry of anger, doffed his helmet and leaping to the ground seated himself amid the dust, his face hidden behind his hands.

Thus his captains, coming to urge retreat, found him; and, as they watched and gained no word in

answer to their arguments, stole away to their ranks, the silent rage that burned in their master's heart communicating itself to theirs. In a moment they knew retreat was impossible, the only alternatives victory or death, for the same strange power that had distinguished the ambitious youth amongst Cordovan students now held sway over his captains' minds and bowed them to his will.

To the surprise of the Christians, their enemies, whom they had thought on the eve of flight, rallied, hurling themselves with such ferocity against spear and sword that Ramiro and his ally were fain to withdraw and take refuge within the walls of Leon.

It was after this battle the ruler of Cordova adopted his title "Almanzor," "The Victorious"; but, in spite of all his projects for the internal government of the kingdom and the building of new palaces, he did not allow his military laurels to rest on the battles he had already won, lest they should gradually droop and fade away from the minds of his subjects.

In July, 997, he embarked on the invasion of Galicia by way of the modern Portugal, transporting the greater part of his infantry by sea to Oporto, where he joined them with his cavalry and staff. Northwards from the river Douro the road became ever more mountainous and difficult, and Almanzor himself began to have suspicions with regard to some of the Christian troops whom he had originally enlisted to overawe the Cordovans, but never as yet had employed against enemies of their own faith.

Sending privately for a Moslem trooper, whom he knew he could trust, he bade him hurry on in advance to a narrow pass that commanded the road by which



they must go, and arrest the first man who approached from the direction of the camp. The trooper did as he was directed, inclined to curse his master's zeal, as, through one of the worst tempests that had ever descended on the mountainside, he waited during a whole night's exposure without seeing a soul. At dawn his patience was rewarded by the appearance of a solitary figure riding on an ass, a wood-cutter going to fell trees. The trooper let him by as of no account, then recalling Almanzor's words: "Bring me the first person who would enter the pass," rode after the fellow and roughly bade him halt.

"Nay," said the man. "I pray thee let me go on my way and earn my bread in peace."

"Willy-nilly thou must come with me," answered the other, seizing his bridle-rein and threatening him with a dagger, and in this wise led him to Almanzor's tent where he was bound and searched. Nothing was revealed.

"Examine the ass," said the Commander impatiently, when he was told, and true to his expectations a letter was found sewn inside the saddle-cloth. Written by a Leonese soldier in Moslem pay, it was directed to the Captain of the Christian army beyond the mountains, and contained information of where and at what time it would be easiest to attack the camp.

Almanzor at once gave orders for the arrest and death of the traitors, including the wood-cutter, and then set forward with his trusted Moslems across the mountains. In a glittering throng of mail and banners his army descended into the plain that lay at the foot of Compostella. His day of complete vengeance had come.



Here and there a small fortress offered resistance only to be stormed and razed to the ground; but in all the land no army was found strong enough to face this mighty host that, pillaging monasteries and convents and desecrating their chapels, came at last to the very gates of Compostella, the most sacred spot in Spanish Christendom. All was deserted—no one on the ramparts, the houses empty, the streets silent. In the great church one figure alone knelt before the saint's shrine. It was an old man, bent and apparently heedless of the threatening soldiery that crowded round him.

"What dost thou here?" demanded Almanzor.

"I am praying to Santiago," answered the other tranquilly.

"Pray on!" returned the Moslem Commander, and gave orders that no one should do him harm.

It was the only act of reverence shown in Compostella. "On the morrow," says an Arabic chronicler, "no one would have supposed it ever existed."

Church, chapels, convents, houses, castle—all were stripped of their treasures, levelled with the ground and set on fire. The golden bells that had been the pride of Galicia, borne on the shoulders of a multitude of Christian captives, followed the victorious army back over the passes of the mountains and so to Cordova, where they were hung reversed as lamps in the central aisle of the great mosque.

"In those days," says a Christian chronicler, "divine worship was extinguished in Spain: the glory of Christ's servants was brought low: the treasures of the Church, amassed in the course of centuries, were all pillaged."

One more campaign, victorious as the rest, the greatest of Cordovan rulers waged against the Christians, when at length they dared to raise their heads in defiance after the crushing blow that he had dealt them.

Returning home to make a triumphal entry into Cordova, he fell ill and died at Medina Celi. On his tomb were engraved the words: "His history is written on the earth if thou hast eyes to read it. By Allah the years will never produce his like nor such another defender of our coasts." But the Christians, writing in their monkish chronicles, dealt with the event after a different fashion:

"Almanzor died in 1002: he was buried in Hell."

\* \* \* \* \*

Santiago de Compostella rose again from the ashes of Moslem fires around a larger and more beautiful cathedral than the church that had been destroyed; and when in June, 1236, San Fernando, King of Castile and Leon, conquered Cordova, he sent back the bells that Almanzor had pillaged borne on the shoulders of Moorish captives.

Even before this date, however, the glory and reputation of the saint's shrine had been fully restored. Writing early in the eleventh century, Pope Calixtus III, a Spaniard, who himself visited Compostella, wrote with enthusiasm:

"The doors of the sacred cathedral are never closed. . . . Thither all wend their way, rich and poor, prince and peasant . . . some travel at their own expense, others depend on charity. . . . Thither come

all the nations of the earth. The pilgrims travel across Europe in mighty companies, and in companies they place themselves beside the sepulchre, the Italians on this side, the Germans on that, as the case may be, each one holding a wax taper in his hand."

Calixtus does not mention the English; but we know from Chaucer that in the fourteenth century the Wife of Bath, at any rate, amongst her other journeys included northern Spain.

"At Rome she hadde been, and at Bologne,  
In Galice at Saint James, and at Cologne."

Probably curiosity and the sociable pilgrim life inspired her visit, but many travellers came to give thanks for mercies vouchsafed, as they believed, through the intercession of St. James, others to seek pardon for their sins or cure of mortal ills through this same channel of grace.

"Many," says Pope Calixtus, "whom the Apostle has delivered from prison, bring with them their manacles . . . the sick come and are cured, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the dumb speak, the possessed are set free, the sad find consolation. . . ."

To Spaniards, greater than all these miracles was the patriotic zeal their saint displayed when Christian armies were in danger, appearing on the battle-field in shining armour, and himself discomfiting the foe. On account of these military deeds of prowess they dubbed him "caballero," or "knight," and referred to him courteously in their speech as "Señor," at which strangers visiting the country were sometimes inclined to laugh.

"I thought the saint had been a fisherman and not a knight?" exclaimed a Greek bishop one day as he rode amongst the pilgrims.

"Nay, but he is a knight," answered the Spaniards angrily, and soon afterwards it appears their boast was confirmed, for one night as he slept the bishop saw Santiago himself, clad in shining armour.

"Behold, I am indeed a warrior," he said gently, holding out a bunch of keys that were in his hand. . . . "and that ye may know this, learn that to-morrow I will with these very keys open the gates of the City of Coimbra to my dear Spaniards."

Now Coimbra at that time was in Moslem occupation but closely invested by the Christian forces, and according as the saint had declared, on the morrow it was delivered into their hands.

After this prompt fulfilment of prophecy there could no longer be any doubt as to Santiago or his knightly rank.

## CHAPTER V

### “ *MY CID* ”

THE history of Spain has been called a crusade, because throughout the Middle Ages the main occupation of Spaniards was the winning back of their country from its infidel conquerors.

At first the Christians who refused to bow their necks beneath the Moslem yoke could lay claim only, as we have seen from the tales of Pelayo, to caves and crevices in the Asturian Mountains; but there came a time when their descendants succeeded in founding military settlements and finally small states like those of Leon and Castile, Aragon and Navarre.

Often, in the early days of these kingdoms, their rulers warred amongst themselves, and so fierce became their rivalry that first one and then another would appeal for assistance, to their Moslem neighbours, heedless of the barrier of faith. Thus it can be seen that, for a period, family quarrels and greed for territory were a more dominating influence than the crusading spirit of later mediaeval centuries.

Rodrigo Diaz, or “ Ruy ” Diaz, “ the Cid,” greatest of all Spanish heroes, went out to battle on behalf of Moslem Emirs nearly as often, according to his chroniclers, as at the command of his overlord, the King of Castile; but after his death, when a cycle of legends grew around his famous deeds, the beliefs and hopes of a new generation deemed him a crusader



instead of merely what he had been, an astute brigand, fighting, as he once remarked in his practical fashion, "in order that he might have bread to eat."

Ruy Diaz was born in the hamlet of Bivar, a few miles from the walled city of Burgos, about the year 1046. We know not whether he was handsome or ugly, save that in later life he had a very fine beard that his enemies had a great desire to pull in jealous derision, but did not dare for fear of his terrible anger.

The legends of his boyhood declare him precocious alike in wisdom and strength, saying that because of these kingly qualities he was chosen by the townsmen of Burgos, at the age of ten, to mete out justice to unfortunate robbers, less successful in their trade than he himself afterwards proved. He was at any rate haughty, passionate, and, like all his race, a good judge of horseflesh.

One day his godfather, a priest of Burgos called Peter Fat, took him out into a field where some colts were running wild and bade him choose one as a gift. He instantly picked out a mangy-coated fellow, thin and ugly.

"Bavieca!" (silly one) cried his godfather. "Thou hast made a foolish choice."

"Nevertheless it will prove a fine steed, you will see," answered the boy confidently, and the colt, which he named "Bavieca" and led proudly away, was to justify his words beyond even an Irish horse-dealer's reckoning. If legend speaks true, he carried his master through battle, and skirmish, exile and triumph for over fifty years; and at last, having borne back Ruy Diaz' corpse to Burgos, was himself buried two years

later before the Convent gate, as the Cid had left word on his deathbed.

“When ye bury Bavioca, dig his grave far into the ground, for a shameful thing it were that he should be eaten by dogs who hath himself trampled down so many dogs of Moors.”

Ruy Diaz was the youngest of his brothers, but was soon recognised as the head of his family because of his valour and prowess. His father, Diego Laynez, had been a warrior himself but had grown old with much fighting, so that his wrist trembled and he could no longer hold a lance.

One day his sons found him in his banquet hall, sitting before a table laden with food, but eating nothing, sunk in an anger so sullen and bitter that his face had the ferocity of a wild animal.

Answering the question in their awed eyes, he bade them mark well how he, Diego Laynez, a Castilian noble, had been struck on the cheek by the Count de Gormaz, and yet rested there with the insult upon him, because he was unable to avenge it through age and weakness.

Seizing his sons by the hand in turn, he bit their fingers fiercely, whereat the three eldest cried aloud in pain and terror, but the youngest, Ruy Diaz, only in anger, saying:

“A curse on thee! Let go! Wert thou not my father . . . with my very hands would I tear out thy heart, driving in my fingers instead of a knife or dagger.”

Then the old man laughed aloud in sudden pride at the boy's boldness that seemed to match his own burning hate.

“Son of my heart,” he cried, “thy fury heals my own. . . . Show but the same spirit, Rodrigo, in quest of my honour, which is lost to me for ever if it be not recovered and won back by thee.”

Thus encouraged, and girt by his father with his own armour and sword, the young Ruy Diaz set forth, asking nothing, we are told by his chronicler, “but of heaven justice and of man a fair field.”

The Count de Gormaz, when the boy stopped his horse and threw down his gauntlet in challenge, laughed scornfully.

“Thy insolence merits a whipping . . . but for thy years I will let thee go,” he began, then said no more but drew his sword, as a resounding slap tingled on his cheek.

Long the two fought, but there was no withstanding Ruy Diaz in the blaze of his anger even as a lad, and at last the Count sank wounded to the ground; and his young rival, leaping to his feet, slew him as he knelt and cut off his head according to the barbarous custom of the time.

“Then back returned the unconquer’d boy  
Unto his fasting sire;  
His foeman’s head at the saddle-bow  
Dripped blood into the mire.  
‘Father, I bring thee sauce,’ he said,  
‘For thy jaded appetite;  
The tongue that wronged can wrong no more,  
Nor the hand that smote thee smite.’”

By the successful issue of his combat Ruy Diaz won recognition not only as the head of his family but as the most valiant of all the Castilian “hidalgos” or nobles.

Ximena, the youngest daughter of the Count de Gormaz, was amongst those fascinated by his prowess.

One ballad tells of her vain appeal to King Fernando of Castile for vengeance on the youth who had slain her father; but another describes how her proud spirit matched so well with that of the young Rodrigo that at last, in spite of his deed, she sought him as her husband, a proposal that, on account of her beauty and pride of race, was quite to his fancy.

“ He stood and blushed before her, and thus at last said he—  
 ‘ I slew thy sire, Ximena, but not in villainy :

\* \* \* \*

In no disguise I slew him, man against man I stood;  
 There was something wrong between us and I did shed his  
 blood.

I slew a man, I owe a man : Fair lady, by God’s grace  
 An honoured husband thou shalt have in thy dead father’s  
 place.’ ”

Ruy Diaz was faithful to Ximena all his life. Indeed they cared for one another so well that “ the parting between them was like separating the nail from the quick flesh ”; but he was a warrior before even a lover, as the story shows that describes how he rode from the wedding with his bride to her mother’s house, and there took a vow not to claim his wife again until he had won five battles in the field.

This very mediaeval idea of a bridegroom’s wedding-present was but a small matter of achievement for the young lord of Bivar, whom the Moors called in awe “ the Cid,” or “ Chief,” and the Castilians “ the Campeador,” or “ Challenger.” Battles were not far to seek nor strategy a science requiring deep brains and forethought.

To-day long-distance batteries and aeroplane photography have taught armies that their first duty is to conceal their movements. In eleventh century

Spain this art of deception would have been voted dull and ill-befitting knights, though, if successful, then on occasions no doubt worthy of excuse. By popular practice, however, armies were wont to summon one another to a settled spot by trumpet or messenger, and there on the site chosen decide the issue by hard blows, the battle often beginning with a single combat between two champions, one of whom had ridden forth and challenged the other to fight, as in the old story of David and Goliath.

Because Ruy Diaz feared no champion, Spaniard or Moor, but was always eager to vaunt the valour of his side, he was nicknamed “the Campeador”; and many were those who repented their rash response to his trumpet call and bit the dust beneath the blows of his terrible sword “Tizona.”

When Fernando died, who had been king of all the north-west of Spain, his eldest son, Sancho III, who inherited Castile, made the Cid his Standard-bearer and General of his forces. Together they fought not only against the Moors but against the other sons and daughters of Fernando, whom Sancho hated because his father had left them in his will important towns and estates that he himself coveted. It had been the old king’s argument that in this way each bit of his kingdom would be personally governed by one of his descendants, but the arrangement seemed to Sancho a deliberate blow at his authority, since, as eldest son of the royal house, he deemed he should have received the entire kingdom.

He began his reign, therefore, by expelling his brother Garcia from Galicia and throwing him into prison, while he deprived his sister Elvira of her town



of Toro. Against Alfonso, his next brother, whom his father had created King of Leon, he fought a terrible battle, in which he was defeated and driven away in headlong flight, the explanation of this disaster being, according to the chonicle, that "my Cid was not in the field" to stand at his master's right hand.

Ruy Diaz, however, though too late for the first encounter, came up with the flying Sancho, and cheered him with crafty counsel as well as by the sight of a force of warriors fresh and eager for battle.

"It is the way of the Leonese," he said, "to extol themselves when their fortune is fair . . . in this boastfulness will they spend the night, so that we shall find them sleeping at break of day and will fall upon them."

Sancho accepted this advice, and at dawn the new army of Castilians, led by the Cid, descended on the unsuspecting Leonese, putting them to rout and capturing Alfonso himself. The latter, on the promise that he would relinquish his claims to Leon and enter a monastery, was released, but instead of doing as he had solemnly vowed, he fled to Toledo and took refuge at the Court of her Mahometan king, awaiting the day when he would be able to regain wealth and power in Christian lands.

One staunch ally he left to uphold his cause, his sister Urraca, whom Sancho now determined to deprive of the strong-walled town of Zamora, left to her in her father's will.

To the princess he sent the Cid as ambassador, that he might persuade her if possible to accept other castles and towns in exchange for her valuable inheritance.

"But, if you will not give my lord, the King, the



*Phot. by Anderson.*

SEVILLE, THE HALL OF THE AMBASSADORS.

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URBANA

town," he ended reluctantly, for he respected the Lady Urraca and did not like the task of threatening her, "then hath he said he will take it even against your will."

At this Doña Urraca wept and lamented aloud, blaming her eldest brother for his covetousness, and saying:

"I am a woman and well know that I cannot strive with him in battle, but I will have him slain either secretly or openly."

In spite of her tears and rash speech, she was by no means a fool and quite as determined on her own way as Sancho himself. When she had sent away the Cid she, therefore, consulted with her nobles and leading townsmen, and then sent for her brother's ambassador again and begged him to intercede with the King on her behalf. . . .

"But," she ended, "if he will go on with what he hath begun, then say to him that I will rather die with the men of Zamora and they with me than give him up the town, either for price or exchange."

Sancho was very angry with his sister when he learned of her obstinacy, and also with his ambassador, the Cid, because he utterly refused to take up arms against the Lady Urraca out of the respect he bore her. Without obtaining his assistance, therefore, the King collected an army together and beseiged Zamora, and for three days and nights he never ceased his attacks, so that the ditches and moats were filled to the top with corpses and the river Douro ran red as it passed below the town.

One thousand and thirty men the King lost in these three days, and though, through the ferocity of his

assaults, some of the barbicans were thrown down, yet he made no breach that could not be repaired and held against him, nor would the Cid come to his aid. .

Now at this time there lived in the town of Zamora a certain Vellido Dolfos, a man of treacherous race, who had overheard the Lady Urraca's rash words uttered in anger against her eldest brother, "I will have him slain either openly or in secret."

Brooding on this speech, and taking into his calculations that the exiled Alfonso was next heir to the throne and would probably pay a large reward to the man who secured him his heritage, Dolfos quitted the town one day on horseback, riding fast and looking back over his shoulder as though he feared pursuit.

When he reached the Castilian camp he begged to be taken to the King's presence, and falling on his knees before Sancho, kissed his hand and spoke smoothly and falsely, saying :

"Sir, because I said to the Council of Zamora that they should yield the town unto you, the sons of Arias Gonzalo would have slain me. And therefore come I to you, sir, and will be your vassal if I may find favour at your hands. And I will show you how in a few days you may have Zamora, if God pleases; and if I do not as I have said then let me be slain."

Sancho, on hearing these words, was very joyful, for after the failure of his assaults he had begun to despair of taking the town, so he refused to hear any warnings against Vellido Dolfos, but kept him by his side and rode with him round the outskirts of the walls that he might be shown the secret postern through which his new vassal declared an army might make an entry with little loss.



In the dim twilight the two approached alone quite near to the ramparts, and Vellido Dolfos, shading his eyes with his hands and gazing towards the town, said :

“Sire, there is the postern of which I spoke. When it is nightfall you shall give me a hundred knights who are hidalgos, well-armed, and we will go on foot, and the Zamorans, because they are weak with famine and misery, will let us conquer them, and we will enter and open the gate, and hold it open till all your host shall have entered in, and thus shall we win the town of Zamora.”

“Would that I could see more plainly,” cried the King impatiently, and he dismounted and handed his hunting spear to his companion, moving some paces forward, while he also raised his hand to shield his eyes. Then Dolfos, who had been watching him like a cat a mouse, smiled to himself and drew the hunting spear back to the full stretch of his arm, and with it thus raised he struck Sancho suddenly between the shoulder-blades, piercing him through his breast and pinning him to the sandy soil.

Low the murderer bent over his victim to make sure that though still alive he was wounded past recovery, then putting spurs to his horse rode away towards one of the main gates of the city. Now “My Cid,” who was approaching, spied him, and, noting his speed, suspected there was mischief afoot and called to him to stop, but Vellido rode on harder than ever. After him went Ruy Diaz, but he had no spurs and, therefore, could not match pace with the traitor, and as he neared the walls he saw the gates open and shut, and knew an enemy had escaped his sword.

Slowly the Cid returned, nursing his suspicions, and

as he rode he came on his royal master lying on the ground, groaning with pain and very near his end, and he said: "The traitor Vellido hath killed me," and shortly afterwards he died.

Bitter was the rage of Ruy Diaz and of all the other knights of Castile at this crime, and little could they be persuaded that this villainy had not been compounded between Doña Urraca and her brother Alfonso in exile, with Vellido Dolfos merely as their tool.

Alfonso was now by right of birth king both of Castile and Leon, but the Castilians, who had fought against him in battle, accepted him with reluctance when he returned to claim his inheritance. At Burgos, where he held his Court, they came slowly and almost silently to kneel and kiss his hand, while Ruy Diaz stood erect in front of the throne and made no sign of homage.

Seeing him, Alfonso was filled with wrath, but dissembled, saying:

"Since now ye have all received me for your lord, and given me authority over ye, I would know of the Cid, Ruy Diaz, why he will not kiss my hand and acknowledge me, for I would do something for him, as I promised unto my father, King Don Fernando, when he commended him to me and to my brethren?"

Then the Cid, speaking proudly, his eyes stern and fierce, showed the King how he and all the Castilian nobles suspected him of complicity in the murder of their lord, Sancho, and at the end, holding up before his bosom a crossbow, he bade Alfonso clear himself by taking oath upon this sacred sign, that henceforth all his knights might follow him in trust and loyalty.

In his heart Alfonso was furious, but he did not wish to quarrel openly with the first warrior in his new kingdom, and therefore he accepted the test.

“As he swore, the changing colour  
From his heart in tumult sent  
On his cheek, like light and shadow,  
To and fro it came and went.  
Thrice he swore it in succession,  
Thrice he swore as he was bid,  
Turned upon his heel in anger  
Vowing vengeance on the Cid.”\*

“From this day forward,” says the chronicle, “there was no love towards ‘My Cid’ in the heart of the King”; but with Ruy Diaz’ changed fortunes as a vassal of Alfonso, ruler of Leon and Castile, we must deal in another chapter.

\* “Ballads of the Cid,” by Gerrard Lewis.

## CHAPTER VI

### *“THE LATER HISTORY OF MY CID”*

KING ALFONSO of Castile and Leon was neither so impulsive nor quick-tempered as his brother, King Sancho, though equally ambitious. Misfortune had taught him to be suave and diplomatic, to bide his time, and make use of opportunities.

When he had fled to Toledo from Sancho's wrath he had been cordially welcomed by King Alimayon, its Mahometan ruler, who had given him a palace near the outer wall of the city with entrance into his own garden, and the two had pledged eternal faith and alliance. This trust was soon to be put to the test, for as Alfonso lay one day in the royal garden, apparently sleeping, the King and his favourite courtiers, not knowing that he was there, began to discuss the military strength of their strong-walled town.

One said Toledo was impregnable for this reason, another for that, while a third, who had been listening in silence, protested:

“Nay, not so! But if an enemy were to beset it for seven years and to cut down the supply of bread and wine and fruit every year, he would capture it at length for lack of food.”

“That is so in truth,” answered King Alimayon: and as he spoke both he and those with him noticed for the first time the Christian prince lying stretched close

by in the shade. The courtiers at once whispered in their master's ear:

"He has overheard our talk, it were best to slay him:" but the King shook his head.

"See if he sleeps," he said to one of them, "you shall know because if so he will have slobbered at the mouth."

King Alfonso, who was very much awake to his own awkward predicament, hastily wet his lips, and the man who bent over him reported him to be sleeping soundly.

"Then there is no harm done," said King Alimayon, and he and Prince Alfonso became greater friends than ever, so that the Moor openly rejoiced when the news came of Sancho's death, and he learned that the royal exile to whom he had given a home was now King of Castile and Leon.

"Never will I ride forth against you to do you evil, neither against you nor against your sons."

This was the oath Alfonso took in Toledo before he rode away northwards, and because of it and because of his secret hatred of the Cid he banished that warrior as soon as he believed that his throne was secure, on the pretext that he had pursued some Moors, who had invaded Castile, into Toledan territory.

Now Ruy Diaz had gone blithely on this expedition as was his wont, burning villages and collecting prisoners and pillage after the custom of the age, and it did not please him to be taken to task for his prowess. According to the story, king and vassal met near the Cid's own hamlet of Bivar, and the vassal, though somewhat aggrieved, dismounted and would have kissed his master's hand, but the other withdrew it angrily.

"I bid thee quit my land, Ruy Diaz . . . ." he began, and the Cid answered quickly, to the joy of



all Castilians standing by, who despised their king as a Leonese, and, therefore, something of a foreigner:

“Sir, I am not in your land but my own.”

The insult was patent, and Alfonso, choking with wrath, replied:

“Ruy Diaz, I bid thee quit my kingdom without any delay at all,” and could not be persuaded to grant more than nine out of the thirty days of grace usually allowed to those condemned to exile.

Great was the weeping in Burgos and all the country round at the banishment of their Cid. Hard he might be and cruel to the Moors and to Christian men of other kingdoms when he fought against them, but he had always loved and protected his own city, and had none of the exclusive pride that made many of the Spanish nobles so unpopular even with their own followers.

Once, as he rode with twenty knights to visit the Shrine of Compostella, the chroniclers tell us, he saw a leper struggling in a marsh by the roadside. Deeper and deeper the wretched man sank the more he tried to extricate himself, but the knights, who saw the Cid hesitate as he watched these struggles, caught him by sleeve.

“Come, let us hasten,” they said. “Dost thou not see it is only a leper?”

Then the Cid turned on them angrily, sprang to the ground, drew the leper out of the quagmire, and seated him behind him on his own saddle. That evening, when they reached an inn Ruy Diaz invited the leper to sit with him at his table, and, when the other knights would not join them, he took him to his room where the two lay down to sleep in one bed.

At midnight the Cid felt a sharp pain between his shoulder-blades, as though a cold breath had struck him, and waking up he called to the leper but received no answer. The man had vanished.

“How may this be?” he said to himself, “seeing the window and door are both barred,” but while he lay and wondered, of a sudden he became aware of a bright light and of a man in white robes standing at the foot of his bed.

“I am St. Lazar,” exclaimed the vision, “the leper to whom for the love of God thou didst show so great honour and kindness. Because of this that thou hast done for God’s sake He shall grant thee that thou shalt accomplish thy heart’s desire . . . so that thy honour shall go on increasing from day to day . . . and thy enemies shall never prevail against thee.”

This legend reveals a characteristic of the Cid, borne out by other tales, the rough kindliness that he would show at one minute as naturally as blind rage or cunning at another.

When he would have lodged in Burgos before setting forth to seek his fortunes he found all doors barred against him by the King’s orders, and his own house dismantled.

“With tearful eyes he turned to gaze upon the wreck behind :  
His rifled coffers, bursten gates, all open to the wind ;  
Nor mantle left, nor robe of fur, stript bare his castle hall,  
Nor hawk nor falcon in the mew, the perches empty all.”

“My enemies have done this,” he exclaimed to his kinsman, Alvar Fañez, then added :

“Cousin, the poor have no part in the wrong which the King hath wrought. . . . See now that no harm be done unto them along our road.”

“Go in a lucky minute and make spoil of whatever

you wish," cried an old woman from her window as the Cid and all his followers clattered by. He drew after him a goodly company, for "some left their houses to follow him, others forsook their honourable offices which they held."

"Cid, we will go with you," cried Alvar Fañez, "and never fail you. In your service will we spend our mules and horses, our wealth and our garments, and be unto you loyal friends and vassals."

That a small army of enthusiastic partisans is capital in itself of great value Ruy Diaz was the first to recognise, but his army must be fed and paid, and for this purpose he must find ready money, of which he had in his possession at this time scarcely a silver piece.

While he paused a few miles without the town to consider ways and means he remembered suddenly two rich Jews called Rachel and Vidas, who made a living in Burgos by lending large sums on good security.

The Cid knew them well, for a share of the spoils he reaped in war had often helped to swell their money-bags, so now he sent his nephew to them in haste, bidding them come secretly to his house by night if they inclined to a stroke of business that would leave them wealthy men for life.

Rachel and Vidas, their curiosity aroused, pressed the young man to state the nature of this business, on which he told them, after they had taken an oath that they would reveal his words neither to Christian nor Moor, that his uncle possessed two large coffers filled with treasure that he had taken as ransom of those he had made prisoner and despoiled in the land of Toledo. On account of their weight he could not carry the boxes with him, yet for fear of the King's avarice and

anger he durst not leave them hidden anywhere on his estate.

The Jews, appreciating circumstances apparently so much to their advantage, came by night as was arranged, and after much bargaining over the coffers that were covered with red and gold leather, ribbed with bars of iron, studded with gilt nails, and fastened with a triple lock, they agreed on the security offered to lend the Cid six hundred silver marks.

At this the Cid's men lifted up the coffers on their shoulders, groaning at their weight, and under his nephew's direction bore them to the Jews' house, and there, when they had set them down, the nephew received for the Cid six hundred marks, and for himself thirty marks. . . .

"Wherewithal," said one of the Jews, "you may get breeches and a fur robe and a fair mantle."

The young man, accepting the gift for his trouble, "departed right joyfully," and before cockcrow he and his uncle and their followers were well on their way to the borders of Castile, while in Burgos two disillusioned Jews wept bitter tears over the wealth of fine sand they had found preserved in the red leather coffers, bound with iron and fastened with a triple lock.

"God knows I did the thing more of necessity than of wilfulness. By His help I shall redeem all."

Such was Ruy Diaz' pious comment on his successful piece of swindling.

During the first few months of exile the adventurers supported themselves by attacking small hill towns, putting their garrisons to ransom, and pillaging their defenceless neighbourhood. This was a sport, however, that could not outlast the element of surprise,

and at length the Cid was driven further afield towards the land of Aragon and the various petty kingdoms the Moors had established in Valencia, Saragossa and other towns.

His chief comrades in arms at this time were Alvar Fañez, his "right arm," a commander of considerable repute in Castile, and Pero Bermudez, his standard-bearer, Pero, "the dumb," as he was called because of the stutter that made him slow to answer a taunt in speech, but the quicker it seemed to embark on rash or heroic deeds.

Once, when the Moorish King of Valencia sent an army of over three thousand men with orders to capture the Cid alive and put his following to the sword, the Castilians, because of their inferior numbers, hesitated to attack this host. Then it was that Pero Bermudez precipitated a battle.

"God help you, Cid Campeador," he cried aloud, breaking his silence as he saw the enemy winding across the plain in front. "I shall carry your banner into the midst of the main body, and you are bound to stand by it. I shall see how you will succour it."

Ruy Diaz called to him impatiently to await orders for an advance, but he might as well have spoken to the north wind.

"I will stop for nothing and no man," declared Pero Bermudez, and rode right in amongst the Moorish horsemen, who beset him on all sides trying to seize his banner. At this sight the hearts of the Christians became inflamed, and they and the Cid charged so furiously that they swept right through the enemy's ranks and back again, slaying as they went. "Thirteen hundred did they kill in this guise."



In vain the Moors beat their tambours to drown the sound of the Christian trumpets and the wails of their own wounded and dying. Panic set in, and when they saw their commander brought to the ground by three terrible blows of the Cid's sword, they turned and fled in confusion.

After the battle, Ruy Diaz sent Alvar Fañez with thirty horses bridled and saddled, a sword hanging at the bow of each, that he might present them as a gift to King Alfonso, for the exile had never lost the hope of returning home and wished to pacify and impress his royal master. In the meantime, he must seek bread elsewhere, so we find him next a warrior in the service of Almudafar, the Moorish King of Saragossa.

For eight long years he drew this foreign pay, harrying the border lands of Castile, or making inroads on the territory in the north-east of the peninsula claimed as subject land by Raymond Berengar, Count of Barcelona. This Catalan Prince ruled a province more French than Spanish in its political sympathies and culture, and to its highly-civilised inhabitants the Castilian adventurer and his followers seemed a low order of brigand, unworthy to fall by a knight's sword. Nevertheless, when the Count learned that the Cid had taken spoils from Moors and Christians, whom he believed that he alone had a right to fleece, he felt that the brigands must be punished.

“This outlaw,” he exclaimed haughtily, “must be made to know whose honour he offends,” and so set forth southwards with flashing of steel and many banners flying.

Far otherwise proved the event. After a short but terrific combat the Catalonians were put to rout, and

Count Raymond himself taken prisoner and led to Ruy Diaz' tent. At first, in his wounded pride, he would neither eat nor drink, saying aloud that "he would rather die, since he had been beaten in battle by such a collection of ragged fellows," and for three days he fasted and sulked, but at last the Cid persuaded him to eat by promising him his freedom with any two of his knights whom he should choose to name.

"If you will indeed do this thing," exclaimed the Count, "then I shall marvel at you as long as I live."

Again the Cid took an oath that he would set him free as he had promised, and so he clothed him and the knights who were to accompany him "with good skins and mantles, and gave them each a good palfrey with good caparisons, and he rode out with them on their way." Whether or no, as some historians maintain, the Cid received a ransom, the incident is typical of mediaeval courtesy. It reveals the bright side of the shield of chivalry too often stained and dented by cruelty and treacherous dealing.

Brave knight as he was, the Cid was also a child of his age in its vices and failings, and all the romances and songs, whether Christian or Arabic in origin, that deal with his career during these years portray him as an unscrupulous freebooter. The bargains he struck with the petty rulers whose kingdoms he terrorised were of the pie-crust order, made to be broken as greed or impulse dictated, and when intent on achieving some ambition he would hesitate at no brutality or crime.

"He was the scourge of the country," says an Arabic writer. . . . "He overran the plains like a conqueror . . . nor was there any district that he

did not ravage. . . . Victory always followed his banner. May Allah's curse rest on him!"

The Spanish Mahometans at this time were in a deplorable state of weakness and confusion, for on them, as on the Gothic kings whom their ancestors had deposed, the soft climate and easy life of the southern peninsula had had its enervating effect. The first rulers of Cordova had contrived to be great generals as well as patrons of learning and lords of a luxurious court, but with time the luxury increased and the military glory that had been its safeguard fled. Instead of an Arabic empire there developed innumerable small kingdoms, Granada, Seville, Cordova, Valencia, Saragossa, Toledo, whose kinglets, jealous of one another and enfeebled by selfish ambitions, proved powerless to withstand the gradual Christian advance.

When King Alimayon of Toledo found himself hard pressed by the Moors of Cordova it was to the Christian Alfonso, his former guest, instead of to another Moorish ruler, that he turned for help; and on his appeal Alfonso appeared at once with so large an army that the Cordovans immediately retreated.

Alimayon went out perforce to meet and thank his ally, but when he saw the number of the Christians his heart grew heavy with fear for himself, a feeling by no means dispelled at Alfonso's hearty invitation to a banquet in his tent, pitched just beyond the city walls. The feast proved magnificent, the host did everything in his power to cheer and soothe his guest, but just as Alimayon's terror began to abate Alfonso suddenly reminded him of the oath of loyalty he himself had taken before he had returned to Castile.

“Relieve me of that promise, I pray you,” said the Christian ruler earnestly, and the Moor, because he knew himself a virtual prisoner and his city an easy prey, was forced to comply with as good a grace as he could muster. Three times, therefore, he repeated aloud the consent that freed his companion from all obligation of friendship to him or his sons, then sat down trembling in his chair, and when he had done so, Alfonso, who had sent for a copy of the Gospels, rose and laid his hand upon the sacred Books.

“Since now you are in my power,” he said, inclining his head towards the astonished Moor, “I promise never to come up against you nor against your son, and to aid you against all men, and I repeat this oath because, before I had an excuse for breaking it and failing to fulfil its conditions, in that I swore it when I was in your power.”

This tale concludes with Alfonso and his Toledan ally embracing one another and rejoicing together; but there was in time a very different sequel, for Alimayon died, and his son; and his grandson Yahia, who succeeded them was, according to the Christian chroniclers, “a bad king and one who walked not in the ways of his fathers.”

Towards him Alfonso felt no scruples of friendship, but brought his army and besieged Toledo, and cut off from it the supplies of wine and fruit and bread, so that, having weakened the inhabitants through famine, he was able to storm the ramparts and effect an entry.

The Cid, who had been temporarily reconciled to his royal master, it would almost seem for the occasion, performed prodigies of valour and was made the first





*Photo. by Anderson.*

TOLEDO, THE GATE OF THE SUN.



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Christian “alcayde,” or governor, of the city; but a few years later he failed to join Alfonso in an expedition against the Mahometans of Southern Spain, and once more fell into disgrace.

This campaign ended in disaster for the Christians, since the Moors of Andalusia, weak and impotent to defend themselves, had imported from Africa an army of Berber fanatics, the Almoravides, under an extremely able general, Prince Yusuf. Instead, therefore, of overwhelming a terrified foe, the Christians on the field of Zelaca, found themselves attacked on three sides by troops more formidable than any they had yet encountered, and soon fled in confusion like their forefathers from the waters of the Guadalete.

“My Cid,” who had boasted that Spain, betrayed by one Rodrigo, should be delivered by another, was not there to save the day: some said that he had not received the King’s summons in time, others that it was through jealousy, while yet a third rumour described him busy elsewhere, pursuing schemes more to his personal advantage.

Certain it is that at this time Ruy Diaz won great wealth and power in the north, selling his sword sometimes to one Moorish ruler, and then again to this sovereign’s rival, even on occasions to both at once, betraying each in turn for his own advancement in the name of his overlord Alfonso, whose commands he was equally ready to flout.

The summit of his achievements was the capture of Valencia in the year 1094, after an heroic defence by the Moors, who regarded this city and province as one of the chief in their dominions.

"The Cid made war upon the city as cruelly as he could," we are told in the chronicles of this date, and how cruel he could be when thwarted we find a few pages further on. . . .

"He held that the worst war which he could make upon the men of Valencia was to let them die of hunger. So he ordered proclamation to be made so loud that all the Moors upon the walls could hear, bidding all who had come out from the town to return into it, or he would burn as many as he could find. . . . As many as he found he burnt alive before the walls so that the Moors could see them; in one day he burned eighteen, and cast others alive to dogs who tore them in pieces. . . . And if they knew that any who came out had left kinsmen or friends in the town who would give anything for them, they tortured them before the walls, or hung them from the towers of the mosques which were without the city, and stoned them. . . ."

Little wonder that a Moorish poet wept for Valencia as a city "in the hour of death."

"The four corner-stones whereon thou art founded would meet together and lament for thee if they could !

Thy lofty and fair towers which were seen from far, and rejoiced the hearts of the people . . . little by little they are falling.

Thy white battlements which glittered afar off, have lost their truth with which they shone like sunbeams. . . .

Thy pleasant gardens which were round about thee . . . the ravenous wolf hath gnawn at the roots, and the tree can yield thee no fruit. . . .

The fire hath laid waste the lands of which thou were called mistress, and the great smoke thereof reacheth thee. . . .

Valencia ! Valencia ! From a broken heart have I uttered all these things which I have said of thee."

When at last the day of surrender came, and Ruy Diaz rode in triumph through the gates of the city,

ever afterwards to be called “Valencia of the Cid,” the inhabitants seemed to their conquerors “as though they came forth from their graves.” “Even as men say it will be in the proclamation of Azrael on the Day of Judgment, when the dead shall come out from their sepulchres and appear before the Majesty of God; such was the aspect of their faces.”

Ruy Diaz, adventurer-knight, though in theory still a vassal of the King of Castile, was now in practice an independent ruler, so powerful that it pleased Alfonso to forget his misdeeds and flatter him, and even to arrange marriages for his daughters with the Infantes of Carrion, princes “of lofty blood, and proud, and frequenters of the Court.”

He therefore sent for the Cid who, being a Spaniard with great respect for high lineage, was delighted at the suggestion and allowed the alliances to be made. Very wrathful he was afterwards, however, for he discovered his sons-in-law to be cowards, in spite of their birth, and greedy only for his wealth, not to win honour and renown.

How a feud arose between the Infantes and their father-in-law is told in a tale concerning a fierce lion that the Cid kept chained and guarded by three soldiers in the courtyard of his palace in Valencia. One day this lion broke loose and entered the hall where the Infantes were playing chess and Ruy Diaz lay asleep upon a settle. The attendants of the Campeador sprang up at once to guard their lord, but, instead of joining them, one of the princes hid beneath the couch, while the other, running this way and that in his terror, fled at last through the door crying:

“ I shall never see Carrion more.”

Outside in the courtyard he climbed upon a wine press that utterly soiled and tarnished all his fine clothes.

In the meantime the Cid, awakened by the piteous cry, saw what had happened, and leaped to his feet, advancing with his cloak on his arm so boldly that his calmness scared the lion and it turned tail. Catching it by the neck, its master then dragged it away to its cage without hurt or wound being inflicted on anyone.

“ Returning to the palace through the court,” says the chronicler, “ he asked for his sons-in-law, but found them not. Despite of calling there came no answer. And when they were found, they came so pale, that laughter, you never heard the like, ran round the court. My Cid the Campeador bade it cease, but the Infantes of Carrion held themselves grievously insulted.”

The way they chose to wipe out this insult was characteristic. Fearing to attack the Cid himself, they took away their wives with them from Valencia into the country, and, bringing these defenceless women to a clearing in a wood, stripped them of all save their smocks, and then beat them with their saddle-girths and sharp spurs, until for weariness they ceased. As they rode away, leaving their victims half-dead, one of the brothers exclaimed :

“ Thus is the dishonour of the lion avenged !”

But he reckoned without one of his bodyguard that waited outside the wood. This man, Feliz Muñoz, was a relation of the Cid, and had noticed with uneasiness that whereas the princes had entered the forest with



their wives they returned alone. Suspecting treachery, therefore, he slipped away from his companions and rode here and there between the trees, calling aloud to his cousins, but had no answer.

Presently he found the Cid's daughters, as they lay in the clearing almost unconscious and covered with blood. He revived them with water from a stream, put them upon his horse, and brought them to a place of safety as quickly as he might, for fear that if darkness came upon them wild beasts might devour them as they lay.

Afterwards he sent word of their fate to the Cid and to the King of Castile; and Alfonso was very angry at the news, for he felt himself dishonoured by the Infantes' shameful deed, because it had been he who had arranged the marriages. He therefore summoned the princes of the House of Carrion to appear before his "Cortes," or Parliament, to make answer for the wrong they had done, and the Cid came before the Cortes also with an army of his followers, and by the decree of the Cortes he chose Pero Bermudez and two others to challenge his sons-in-law to mortal combat.

Very loath were the Infantes to accept this challenge, but the King would not heed them when they pleaded their high birth and declared that the Cid was not their peer; and so, on the day chosen, they and their uncle perforce met the Cid's knights in open combat, according to the decree of the Cortes that said judgment should rest on the issue of the battle.

Not long was it before Pero Bermudez had brought his enemy to the ground, mortally wounded, while another of the Cid's knights drove the second Infante,

streaming with blood, in terror from the lists: their uncle also they killed, so that Ruy Diaz' daughters were well avenged, and those who had so brutally insulted them proclaimed traitors by the King himself.

"After the sentence was given that family never again raised its head nor was of any account in Castile."

Thus speak chroniclers of the House of Carrion, but Ruy Diaz, they tell us, increased in fame and married his daughters to other and greater princes than the Infantes who had despised them. Like a king he ruled in Valencia, "not one of the Moors durst look him in the face."

Time passed, however, and the Cid grew old and was forced to rely on his captains to whom he could not bequeath the power and courage that had made his name a terror to his enemies. Then the Moors of all the country round, when they heard his health was failing, rejoiced, and they gathered their forces together and like vultures drew round the gates of the city, pressing in upon the Christians, but waiting to make their final attack until they knew the great "Challenger" himself was dead.

"My Cid" was told of their coming, as he lay sick upon his bed, and he knew Valencia must fall after he was gone, because there was no one of his strength or courage left amongst the Christians to use a sword or command an army as he had been wont to do. He remembered also the Castilians who would be left in the city defenceless, and all the wealth he had accumulated that would fall into the hands of the Moors, and his heart and mind burned like fire with the desire to save them.

Then after he had considered deeply he sent for his captains, and gave orders that when he was dead they should embalm his body and clothe it in armour and gird his good sword “ Tizona ” at his side and set him once more upon Bavioca, bound to the saddle so that he could not fall.

“ See that ye utter no cries,” he said to his wife, “ neither make any lamentation for me, either ye or your women, that the Moors may not know of my death.”

Then all the captains and his wife promised that they would do as the Cid bade them; and when in 1099 he died, having asked pardon for his sins and received absolution, they embalmed his body, clothed it in armour, and set him upon Bavioca. And Doña Ximena, instead of weeping, ordered the drums of the city to be beaten, and the men-at-arms and all the Castilians to be collected together; and when the Christians were collected, with their household goods and their spoils in their midst, the whole force issued forth through the gates just at the hour of dawn.

It seemed to the Moors, according to an old legend, that “ there came against them on the part of the Christians full seventy thousand knights all as white as snow, and before them a knight of great stature on a white horse, who bore in one hand a white banner with a bloody cross, and in the other a sword which seemed to be of fire.”

Against this vision human weapons were powerless, so the Moors and their King fled in confusion, and Ruy Diaz de Bivar rode once more in triumph at the head of his men through the discomfited ranks of his enemies, until at last he reached the land of Castile.

There in the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, without the walls of his own loved city of Burgos, he was laid to rest, and the people, rich and poor alike, came from all the kingdom to bid him farewell and do him honour.

“He that was born in a good hour,” “the good one of Bivar,” “the Fighter,” “the Bonny Beard,” these are some of the other names by which “My Cid” has passed down to history.

Many legends, a few of which we have told in these pages, have grown up around his career, as they are apt to do around those of all heroes, but they have not entirely blotted out, as there is often a danger, the real man. Through their mist we can see him still, cruel and generous, cunning yet open-handed, boastful yet cautious, a true warrior of his age, but so far excelling all others in heart and courage that in time it was natural he should become for Spaniards “the Castilian,” emblem of their race and pride through all the centuries.

## CHAPTER VII

### *JAMES "THE CONQUEROR"*

WE have seen that the idea of a national crusade against the Moors had scarcely begun to dawn in the days of the Cid; by the thirteenth century, however, it was an ideal strong enough to weld together all the Christian kings of the peninsula, despite their mutual jealousies and suspicions.

Thus, when Mahomet Ben Yacub, "Commander of the Faithful," an African fanatic, crossed the Straits of Gibraltar in the year 1212 and gathered together an army composed not only of Andalusian Moors, but of Egyptians, Nubians, Persians and Scythians, in the determination to conquer all Spain for the Crescent, as Abd-Er-Rahmān and Almanzor had done of old, he found ready to oppose him the united forces of Castile, Aragon and Navarre.

The Christians, according to a legend, losing their way amid the rocky passes of the Sierra Moreña, towards the hour of dusk came upon a peasant toiling at his plough in a mountain valley. This man at once offered to be their guide, and brought them, first by one narrow defile and then another, to a ridge from which at dawn they could look down unseen upon the Moorish host. Declaring himself to be St. Isidore, the peasant then vanished, and King Alfonso of Castile, much heartened by this vision, turned to his allies, pointing towards the enemy whom he could see slowly winding across the plain, called Las Navas de Tolosa.



"Let us hasten and smite them ere they escape," he exclaimed; and so great was the general ardour that the proposal was joyfully received, although the Christians recognised that they were few in proportion to the foe. Thus they impetuously descended the slope of the mountain, drawing up on the plain in battle order, Alfonso in the centre in the midst of his Castilians, the King of Navarre in command of the right wing, and Peter II of Aragon on the left.

Opposite to them, in the midst of a bodyguard of ten thousand negroes, rode Mahomet Ben Yacub on a camel, the Koran in one hand, his sword in the other, while as far as the eye could reach stretched rank on rank of his spearmen and dart throwers, his corps of camels and mules and all the host that he had brought with him from across the sea.

All day the battle lasted, and Alfonso, finding at length his belief in victory grow dim as his arm weakened, cried in his despair to Rodrigo Ximenez, the Archbishop of Toledo, who rode at his side:

"My Lord Bishop, let us die here!"

"Not so, Sire," answered the other, exultant still in the certainty of St. Isidore's protection, "it is here we shall conquer and live."

Then lifting above his head the massive cross that he carried in his hand, he shouted in a loud voice to those about him that they should give him succour as they hoped for salvation, and so rode on, with the symbol of the Christian faith raised aloft that all might see, right through the midst of the Moorish host.

After him rode the Christian king and his knights, their enthusiasm re-awakened, and so terrible was the impact of their sudden charge that the Andalusians

broke and scattered, followed in panic by their African allies and Mahomet Ben Yacub himself.

"More than one hundred thousand of the infidels were slain," wrote Alfonso to the Pope, describing the victory of Las Navas de Tolosa, that had finally saved Spain from Moorish domination, and marked the first real stage in the Christian reconquest.

Peter II, who, amongst the heroes of this battle, had taken his full share in the fighting, was a grandson of Petronilla, an Aragonese queen who had married a Count of Barcelona, thus uniting the two Christian provinces of North-eastern Spain, Aragon and Catalonia, always hitherto at war. In his veins ran the blood of the Cid's old enemy, Raymond Berengar, who had considered his capture by that famous warrior such an indignity that he could neither eat nor drink for wounded pride.

"It has ever been the fate of my race to conquer or die in battle." So wrote Peter's son, "En Jacme," "the Lord James," describing how, but a short twelve months after Las Navas de Tolosa, his father, when going to the aid of his brother-in-law, the Count of Toulouse, hard pressed by the armies of Northern France, fell in the hour of defeat before the walls of Muret.

His heir, "En Jacme" himself, was but six years old at the time, a prisoner in the hands of his father's enemy, the French Count Simon de Montfort\*, who held him close behind the massive fortifications of Carcassone until compelled by the Pope to return him to his own people.

Such was the adventurous beginning of a career that

\* Father of the Simon de Montfort of English history.

was to prove one long adventure and win for its hero the proud title of "the Conqueror."

Most of what we know of its turmoils and vicissitudes we have learned from James himself, who wrote an account of them simply and graphically in the Catalan tongue, disclosing as he did so his own character, fearless, masterful, hot-tempered, ambitious, and, we are inclined to add, self-complacent. There was so much "En Jacme" proved that he could carry through in the teeth of danger and opposition that it is hardly wonderful if he grew to believe he could do everything and do it well.

"When I was nine years old they could not keep us in Monzon, neither me nor the Count of Provence, my cousin, who was also there, as I, considering it was necessary for the country, wished to go."

These words introduce an account of how the boy king escaped from the Master of the Military Order of Templars, to whom he had been sent for his education, and rode away, clad for the first time in a coat of mail, to set up his Court in Aragon, amid his turbulent barons.

"The people were glad at my coming," he announces simply, but strong though his will, the boy was not yet old enough to impose it on those who had sought his freedom from the Templars in the hope of bending him to serve their private ambitions. Thus, he undoubtedly became for the next few years something of a political shuttlecock in the hands of selfish uncles and a divided Council of Regency, and many were the mortifications his pride suffered in consequence.

One day he was told that a certain knight had dared

to carry off and imprison a personal enemy in the teeth of a royal command that he should desist from private warfare. Furious at this insult to his authority, the young King set forth to deal with the kidnappers, and such was his fiery determination that he succeeded in releasing the captive, but when he would have gone further and punished the offender he found himself powerless before the public opinion of his Court which throve on turbulence.

"I could not take counsel myself about it," he excuses this weakness, "nor had I anyone to consult, being only eleven years old at the time."

More galling still was his virtual imprisonment at Saragossa by rebellious citizens, soon after his marriage, at the age of twelve, to Leonora, a child princess of Castile. James knew he had been betrayed on this occasion by some of his knights in whom he had trusted most, and, turning to one of these, he exclaimed bitterly:

"Pedro Ahones, if it were not for you this dishonour and hurt could not have befallen me. From this moment I therefore cast myself loose from your love, and while I live I will love you not."

At first Ahones was ready with smooth excuses, but when he could not satisfy his young master he also lost his temper.

"As that may be, I care little for your words," he shouted rudely, and left the room.

Up and down strode the King, growing ever more indignant at his own helplessness.

"Though I am still a child, I intend having my revenge," he said to the Queen, who lay on her bed and wept at the noise of the armed men passing to

and fro in the corridor outside. After a time, however, he grew calmer and remembered the trap-door in a floor of one of the rooms leading to an underground passage, so, like a boy, he began to plan that he would send a few knights, who he knew were still faithful, to wait in the street outside.

"I will get two ropes; I will seat you on a board and lower you down," he explained enthusiastically; but perhaps the young Queen had not much belief in the strength of her twelve-year-old husband's arm: perhaps imprisonment had made her peevish. . . .

"Know ye that for nothing in the world will I be lowered down from this on a board with ropes," she declared firmly, and persistent entreaties were of no avail to change her mind.

"I therefore let the thing rest and did nothing on account of her fears."

Thus the incident closed, sadly enough for the King's pride, since in the end he had to pay a large sum of money out of the royal treasury in order to secure his release from the burghers of Saragossa.

Some years later, when James was about eighteen, he fell into another dispute with Pedro Ahones. This time the knight's offence was, first of all, that, having been summoned to join in a campaign against the Moors of Valencia, he had failed to appear at the stated time, and next, that, arriving with some fifty or sixty armed followers after a truce had been arranged between the Christians and their enemies, he declared his intention of pursuing a raid on his own account.

Such double defiance was well-nigh intolerable, but James, who had learned patience in a hard school, condescended to argument and even entreaty.



"Will you not give up your purpose for our prayers and commands?" he demanded at last, to which Pedro Ahones made answer coolly:

"I will do everything for your prayers and commands, but this one thing I cannot do."

"En Jacme" did not lack boldness.

"Since you wish to break what is so dear to me as my word and promise of this truce, know ye that I resolve to take you prisoner," he said, and seized the other by the wrist, as he put his hand upon his sword to draw it.

Thirty or forty of Don Pedro's men were seated on horseback outside the house, and hearing the noise of the ensuing quarrel they now rushed within, freed their master, and rode off with him to the hills. After them in hot pursuit went the King, in a quilted coat he had borrowed from a knight standing by the door, and behind him again the royal bodyguard. They caught up Ahones by a short cut, as he was changing his mount, and one of the King's esquires, slipping to the ground, rushed forwards and struck him in the side with his spear.

Then, as he saw him fall from his saddle, "En Jacme" remembered that this rebel had once been his friend, and his anger vanished.

"I dismounted and put my arms over him, and, pitying him, I said, 'Ah! Don Pedro Ahones, in an evil hour were you born. . . . Why would you not believe the advice I gave you?'"

At this a knight of the royal bodyguard interposed roughly. . . .

"My lord, leave that lion to us that we may take revenge for the harm he has done to us."

"And I said," wrote the King, "God confound you that at this time you should say such things! I tell you that if you strike Don Pedro Ahones you shall have to strike me first." . . . I then had him mounted on a beast with an esquire to support his body, but he died on the road before we got to Burbaguena."

"I am the King of Aragon, and I defend my right: those who come against me are my subjects. . . . I am in my right, they are wrong, and God will help me."

Such was "En Jacme's" simple political creed. Probably, many who in practice defied his authority in theory shared his views; but their turbulence, and the natural independence of the Catalan towns, encouraged the continuance of civil war, in which the destruction of crops led to famine, and famine to further rebellions and discontent.

At length everyone grew so weary of anarchy that peace was patched up, and while it lasted the boy king developed into a man, nearly seven foot tall, "well-made and supple . . . his teeth white as pearls, his eyes black, his hair ruddy with shining threads of gold." So handsome was he that all the ladies of the Court lost their hearts to him, and, strong in everything else, James proved himself weak where women were concerned. Even in that dissolute age his name became a byeword, yet in spite of his love of pleasure he did not degenerate into a mere creature of ball-rooms and banquets. Before all things he remained a soldier, firm in his devotion to the Christian faith as he crudely understood its teaching.

"He put his whole heart and will into warring against the Saracens," wrote a contemporary, and this

quotation might be taken as an apt summary of the better and by far the larger part of "En Jacme's" life.

Two opportunities of "warring against Saracens," neither far to seek, came into the mind of the young King, as he began to consider the idea of turning his subjects' love of battle to better account than allowing them to destroy their own land.

If successful, one project would please the province of Aragon by adding to the royal dominions on the mainland the "Garden of Valencia"; but the other, which was dearer to the heart of a descendant of the Counts of Barcelona, was the fulfilment of a Catalan dream.

Across a narrow strip of sea, not far south of Barcelona, lay four islands in the Western Mediterranean, whose Mahometan population was a constant menace to Christian trade and shipping, for then, as ever in Spanish history, Catalonia was the most thriving and progressive stretch of territory in the peninsula.

"What kind of country is Mallorca?" asked "En Jacme" one noontide, as he sat at dinner in a citizen's house in the Port of Tarragona, his black eyes gazing out over the waste of waters.

The Catalan courtiers, who guessed the purpose underlying this question, hurried off to consult a master-mariner, and brought back word that it was "a good-sized island in the midst of other smaller islands."

"So please you," they added, "we hold it right that you conquer the island for two reasons, the first that you and we will thereby increase in power, the other

that those who hear of the conquest will think it a marvel that you can take land and a kingdom in the sea where God pleased to put it."

Thus encouraged, the King summoned his Cortes, and, by his eloquence, wrung promises of men and arms from his nobles and of money from the citizens, and with these he gathered an army together and embarked at Salou, a port to the south of Tarragona.

At first the wind seemed favourable for making a northern harbour of Mallorca, but James was seldom lucky at sea, and soon a contrary wind arose.

"My lord, by our advice you will put about and go back to land," urged the captain of the royal vessel; but the King, being young and ardent, and remembering with what trouble and hope of glory he had started on this expedition, would not listen.

"Many are in the ships," he declared, "who for the harm the sea has done them would willingly run away from it . . . and if we put back to land they will most certainly leave us, for they are not men of courage."

Thus the royal ship kept on its way, buffeted and tossed, until at length, ahead instead of behind all the other vessels of the fleet as it had started, it came to anchor in a bay on the western coast of the Island of Mallorca.

The Saracens, who were on the watch, could not bring up their troops in time to prevent the landing, but battles were fought on the shore and on the hillside above, and in these James immediately distinguished himself by slaying five of the enemy with his own sword. With difficulty he was held back from leading a further attack.

"Your madness on this day will be the cause of our death," exclaimed two of his older councillors, riding their horses across his path.

"They went on giving great pulls at the bridle until I said: 'You need not do that, I am not a lion or leopard, and since you will have it so I will wait. God grant that ill do not come of it.'"

We can picture the King wheeling back in wrathful impatience as he spoke to the road of caution, but his councillors were wise, as he knew in his heart, for the whole campaign depended on their master's safety.

The army of early mediaeval times seldom deserved that name in any modern sense. In the hour of victory we should rather describe its soldiers as a vigorous rabble, in defeat a flying mob. Between these two decisive moments they would waver according to the personality of their commander, sometimes insolently bold, at others sulkily cautious, very occasionally patient and enduring.

It was because "En Jacme" had in him the right royal stuff of leadership, the mind and courage to take risks himself undaunted, and to suffer hardship or any other evil to gain his end, that, in spite of his youth and inexperience, he was able to wring victory from unpromising odds, making men do his will very often against their own.

"Lo! All the infantry have gone out of the camp and intend to advance," a messenger brought word not long after their landing to the exasperated King who had given no such orders, and he alone, riding post haste to their lines, could persuade them of their folly.

"Bad traitors that you are . . . if a few horsemen come down on you they are sure to kill you to a man."



"The men perceived that I spoke sense to them and accordingly stopped."

On another occasion, "between Christmas and New Year's Day," the sentries posted outside the camp by the King all slipped away to their tents because the night was cold . . . . "upon which I rose, scolded them for their ill-behaviour, and put new sentinels."

Had it been expedient to hang a few of these rascals we may be sure, from the young King's state of nerves, that he would willingly have done so.

"I was therefore awake for three consecutive days and three nights, for when I thought that I could sleep messengers came from those who wanted directions, and even when I wished to sleep I could not, and was so wakeful that when anyone came near the tent I heard him approach."

It took over a year to reduce the island. Of the early stages of the invasion the King wrote:

"That they who hear this book may know how hard a feat of arms was that which was achieved at Mallorca, I will only tell this one thing, that no foot-soldier, sailor, or other, dared lie in the camp for three weeks, except myself, the knights and the esquires who served me: the other foot-soldiers and the sailors came in the morning from their ships and returned at night."

When the town itself was at last taken, upon generous terms to those within, "En Jacme" had almost as great a struggle to keep his army from indiscriminate butchery and pillage as in previously convincing the enemy of his purpose to conquer or die.

"I will have you know," he sent forth word at length, regarding this lack of discipline, "that henceforth it will not be borne: I will first hang so many of

you in the street that the whole town shall stink of it."

This threat had its effect, and the reduction of the island continued steadily, the last band of obstinate Saracens being smoked out of the mountain caves in which they had taken refuge. This task was achieved by a soldier lowered on ropes, who set fire to the grass huts and shelters erected on a ledge, considered by those within the caves an impregnable position.

This feat accomplished, with the capture of two thousand Moors and ten thousand oxen with thirty thousand sheep, the King returned to the capital, and from thence to Tarragona, "joyful and content," leaving his captains to subdue the other small islands and thus add the whole Balearic group to the possessions of Aragon.

He had not long to wait for fresh adventures.

"Since God has guided you so well in this matter of Mallorca," began the Master of the Order of Hospitallers one day soon after his return, "why should not we and you undertake the kingdom of Valencia on this side of the sea, which has been for such a considerable time affronting us and your House?"

The speaker was the mouthpiece of the Aragonese nobility, jealous of Catalan victories; and the young King, descendant of royal Aragon as well as of the Counts of Barcelona, was not slow on his part to adopt the suggestion.

"Valencia of the Cid," "the best land and the finest in the world," "the garden of Spain," rich in vines, rice, oil, wines and oranges: There was not a warrior of Christian Spain but felt the desire to conquer its fair fields and white towers.

Thus the campaign began in enthusiasm, but the first reverse unloosed the elements of which military failure has been so often composed: jealousy, mistrust, foolhardiness, or excessive caution. In this atmosphere, where the King perforce suspected the goodwill of his commanders and they in return feared his ambition, private greed soon reigned triumphant over patriotism, and few or none of the nobles would offer life or service without trying to secure some profit or reward from their act.

A ruler of ordinary ability might well have been daunted in the face not merely of a general lack of discipline but of open hostility. "En Jacme," however, watching all things with shrewd eyes and a hard mouth, was no longer the helpless lad whom a Pedro Ahones could defy successfully. Determined, fearless, swift in decision as in the campaign of Mallorca, the years had now given him a subtle strength and power of judgment before lacking. He had learned the art of using men, even the most unwilling, as pawns on his chessboard, and of playing off the greed of one against the pride of another to make both assist his schemes.

Alone of his army he refused to despair.

The key to Valencia was the possession of Burriana, a small town on the open plain that stood on the other side of the river from Valencia itself; and against it the King brought all his engines of war, including a tall wooden tower from which his slingers could hurl stones upon the besieged.

The tower, in spite of the time and trouble expended on its construction, proved a failure: the small garrison held its own: and the nobles, once so hot for war,

became discouraged and demanded the opening of negotiations.

"Kings cannot perform, as they would wish, all they would undertake, for if all that you kings wish were done all the lands in the world would be yours." So ran their rather scoffing argument in favour of raising the siege, coupled with a threat:

"We see great difficulty in this enterprise of Burriana . . . we should not like to have to tell you that there is no food in the camp, and that we shall be obliged to go away one after another and leave you here almost alone, so that you would come to grief and shame."

Then King James was very angry at their selfish cowardice.

"In my youth," he answered them, "I conquered a kingdom across the sea; I am now in the kingdom of Valencia for the first time; and when I have laid siege to such a petty place as this, not bigger than a farm-yard, you wish me to give it up! Do not believe that I will do such a thing. . . . I would never return to Aragon and Catalonia with such great shame upon me as there would be if I did not take such a town as this."

Later, he reiterated his determination with even greater emphasis, saying that he would call upon the barons of Catalonia since he knew that they at least would not desert his banner. . . .

"And thus will I take Burriana in despite of the Devil and of the bad men who gave me such bad advice."

It is often said that if anyone cares enough for any particular thing he will most certainly gain it. The secret of this success lies, of course, in the word

"enough." How much will anyone plan and toil and sacrifice in order to obtain his chief desire?

James "the Conqueror" is one of the comparatively few men in history who have cared enough for their ambitions to achieve them. In July, 1233, Burriana was surrendered to him; in the autumn of 1238, after a five months' siege, the city of Valencia itself.

The historical facts thus baldly stated convey no idea of the energy and endurance that made their record possible.

"No baron but I would assist Don Bernard," says "En Jacme" of one of his few faithful knights wounded in a dangerous enterprise before the walls of Burriana. "I myself took lint, dipped it in water, and put it to the wound. I then bound it up with a piece of the shirt of an esquire who was there. . . . I said to him: 'Courage, Don Bernard, bear it like a man.'"

The King himself was struck by an arrow in the forehead when riding up to the front lines before Valencia in order to withdraw his foot-soldiers from a dangerous position.

"In anger I struck the arrow with my hand so that I broke it: the blood came out down my face; I wiped it off with a mantle of 'sendal' I had and went away laughing that the army might not take alarm. I then went and lay down in a tent when all my face and eyes swelled so that I could not see for the swelling of the eye on the wounded side."

The Moorish King of Valencia, alarmed at the determination of his enemy, but knowing how half-hearted were many of those who served him, tried at one time to buy the safety of his capital by promising to surrender a number of smaller towns.



"Nay!" answered "En Jacme." "I have arrived at a time and point at which I can take Valencia, and so I intend having the hen and the chickens, too."

When the full terms of surrender were made known by which Valencia became a Christian province with all its towns and villages, the barons, who had sworn the enterprise was beyond their King's power, could ill conceal their chagrin. They "lost colour as if someone had stabbed them to the heart; all murmured except the Archbishop and some of the bishops, who said they thanked our Lord for giving me that gain and that grace: not one of the others thanked God for it or took it well."

At his accession, a prisoner despoiled of his heritage, in his early youth merely the overlord of two rebellious provinces, James had now raised his kingdom by his conquests to be one of the chief powers of mediaeval Europe. Other men might have rested on such laurels, not so "En Jacme."

His next endeavour was on behalf of his son-in-law, Alfonso "the Learned," of Castile, who was so wise in the study of subjects such as astronomy and legal procedure that he had no time to be practical in action. Unable to wage successful war against the Moors himself, he appealed to his father-in-law, who followed up his victories in Valencia by over-running Murcia, the province immediately to the south.

What is very wonderful in an age when land-grabbing was a kingly pastime is that James did not keep Murcia for himself but handed it over to Alfonso, who had previously laid claim to the territory in the name of Castile.

Loudly the Aragonese and Catalanian barons

grumbled at this generosity, but the King answered them by pointing out with shrewd political foresight that a Christian province to the south would free Aragon from all fear of the Moors besides throwing the burden of any future crusading enterprise in Southern Spain upon Castilian shoulders. . . .

"If the King of Castile," he concluded, "were ultimately to lose what is his own, you and I would find it harder to keep our property."

If unconvinced, the barons were at any rate forced to agree with the decisions of their now all-powerful overlord, and "En Jacme," freed from trouble at home, began to plan a crusade in the East to win back the Holy Sepulchre. In this project he did not succeed, perhaps because he did not care enough. Age may be more painstaking than youth, but its enthusiasms burn less hotly, and a two months' voyage on a stormy sea that brought King James no nearer the Holy Land than the Mediterranean coast of France, convinced him of God's will that the campaign should be delayed.

When, however, the Pope called a Council at Lyons, in 1274, to consider the welfare of Christendom, James attended in person, and again urged a general crusade, returning to Spain in angry disgust as soon as he discovered how lukewarm was the zeal of his fellow monarchs and even of the heads of the Military Orders, originally founded for crusading purposes.

"All were silent," he says several times, describing the reception given to his offer of men and money: and when he saw that there was nothing of a practical nature to be hoped from the Council he begged the Pope's leave to return home.

"Holy Father, since no one else will speak, let me go." And the Pope said: "Go, with God's blessing!"

"En Jacme's" last years were spent in settling minor troubles that arose with Castile, Navarre and his own Aragonese barons, as well as in disputes with his sons.

In these latter dealings, as in all his personal relations, we see a side of the King's character curious in one so eminently keen-sighted, namely, a childish vanity that, though often considered typically mediaeval, is not unknown in modern heroes. It afforded James naive pleasure that at Lyons he should sit at the Pope's right hand, "his chair not a palm higher than mine," just as he glowed with pride when, riding away from the Council, he heard one Frenchman cry to another:

"Lo! The King is not as old as people said! He could still give a Turk a good lance thrust."

This vanity is perhaps in keeping with the rough, soldier-like qualities that distinguished "the Conqueror," and so are sudden outbursts of rage and cruelty born of authority in a primitive age. The best known of these lapses is his hasty order that a Father Confessor, who had revealed some secret of the Confessional, should have his tongue torn out, a crime for which the King, when censured by the Church, made afterwards open penance.

"En Jacme," his passions in leash, was both kind and generous; and there is something very human in his tale of the bird that built her nest in the roundel of the royal tent before Burriana.

"I ordered the men not to take it down till the swallow had taken flight with her young ones, as

she had come trusting in my protection." This is of the finest essence of the spirit of chivalry.

James "the Conqueror" died in the autumn of 1276, in his sixty-ninth year; "a great king," as mediaeval minds understood the phrase, and great also by modern standards. Not so much do we honour his name to-day for his conquests and crusades nor even for his iron will, as for the understanding that enabled him to shape the destiny of Aragon according to his purpose.

Amongst much good advice that he gave to his son-in-law, Alfonso of Castile, along with the province of Murcia, was a warning that . . . . "he should keep all his people attached to him . . . . but if some only were to be kept in his grace, and he could not keep the others, he should keep at least two parties, the Church and the people and cities of the country. For they are those whom God loves more even than the nobles and the knights, for the knights revolt sooner against their lord than the others. If he could keep with him all of them, well and good; if not, he should keep those two parties, for with their help he could easily destroy the others."

Here is judgment shrewd and practical that future kings of Castile and Aragon would have done well to study; and James, it must be noted, unlike many political doctors, followed his own prescription, limiting the privileges of the nobles and extending popular rights and liberties in the Charters published during his reign.

Of a like tenor is the introduction of a speech made to the King of Navarre:

"When the hour of death comes, we kings take from this world nothing but a shroud apiece, which is indeed

of better cloth than those of other people; but this only remains to us from the great power we once had, that we can serve God with it, and leave behind a good name for the good deeds we did."

Vain and self-complacent "En Jacme" may have been, but beneath this veneer was a true understanding of the issues of life and a strong measure of that common-sense so essential in dealing with them.



## CHAPTER VIII

### *THE MAKING OF A TYRANT— PEDRO I OF CASTILE*

THERE is history in the very name of "Castile."

Only by the "castles" built along her frontier was this kingdom of crusaders enabled to preserve the land that her sons regained acre by acre from a heathen foe: while from her "castles," again, the descendants of these same crusaders defied their kings, and through continual civil war created anarchy in mediaeval Spain.

In theory, Castilian sovereigns protected themselves from their rebellious subjects by harsh treason laws. Let a man speak ill of his king, and the law condemned him to lose his tongue; let him, in a moment's anger, wish he might see his sovereign dead, and he should lose both his eyes; let him embark on a campaign of active treason, and he would risk nothing less than death and the complete forfeiture of his property. Had any practical strength lain behind these old codes, mediaeval Spain would have been filled with a lamentable crowd of baronial blind and dumb, whose more violent brethren lay in traitors' graves.

So much for theory! In feudal practice Castilian nobles treated their king as merely "first among his equals," as overlord of other lords.

"Senor, on behalf of . . . I kiss your hand and inform you that he is henceforth no more your vassal."

By this speech the messenger of a baron could free his master from the duty of allegiance and legalise rebellion. He could also legalise civil war, for the noble

who desired to attack a personal foe was permitted, after having sent a nine-days' warning, to swoop upon his enemy sword in hand with all the forces at his disposal.

The result of such license can be imagined, especially in times when, as at the accession of Alfonso XI, in 1312, the ruler of the country was only a few months old, and ambitious guardians sought their own interests under his name and seal.

Here is an account of Castile about this date by a writer whose parents must have witnessed the anarchy he portrays.

"The Ricos-Hombres\* and knights lived by the robberies and extortions that they practised in the land, and the King's guardians lent them assistance for the sake of having theirs in return. . . . Moreover, the people of the towns were banded together in hostile factions, as well in those places that supported the guardians as in those which were opposed to them . . . in no part of the kingdom was justice duly administered so that persons did not dare go out on the highways unless well-armed, and in sufficient numbers to defend themselves against the marauders. In places which were not fortified no one would live, whilst in such as were the greater part subsisted only by robbery and plunder in which many of the townspeople, workmen as well as gentlefolk, joined; so great, indeed, was the general lawlessness that no one marvelled at meeting dead bodies in the road."

When Alfonso XI was declared old enough, at the age of fifteen, to administer his own affairs, he made a gallant effort to secure the authority his guardians had

\* Not "rich" men but nobles of distinguished birth.

so long bought and sold, and to some extent succeeded during the next thirty years in bending his vassals to his will. Weary of continual strife at home he led them against the Kingdom of Granada, the last remaining province of the Moors, dazzled the national pride by a marvellous victory near Tarifa, in which two hundred thousand Moors were said to have perished with the loss of only twenty Christians, and then fell a victim to the Black Death before the walls of Algeciras.

So great was his fame that the Moorish nobles of Granada put on mourning as a sign of respect for the passing of a noble enemy, while the Christians, in despair of making further progress without his leadership, hastily agreed to terms of peace and broke up their camp.

There were, indeed, problems to be settled at home for Alfonso, if as King he deserved the title of "Giver of Justice" bestowed on him by his people, had been far from just in his domestic life; and the troubles he had sown by neglecting his wife, Queen Maria, and his only legitimate son, Don Pedro, were to bear fruits of discord for nearly twenty years.

This Don Pedro, at the time of his father's death, was a lad of fifteen, brought up by his mother in seclusion at Seville, with hunting for his only amusement and hatred of those who had exiled the Queen from Court as the chief inspiration of his more thoughtful moments.

To Alfonso he had been little more than a name; for the King, who had disliked Maria, had chosen another lady, the beautiful Leonor de Guzman, to play the part of Queen, and lavished all his affection on her and their ten children.

When he went to fight against the Moors it was not Maria but Doña Leonor whom he left as regent, with power to control officials and make gifts of lands and offices; it was not the Infante Pedro who rode at his right hand but his sons by Leonor, Henry Count of Trastamara, "the Count" as he was usually called, for at that time there were no others of that rank in Spain, and his twin brother, Fadrique, who at ten years old had been created Master of the Military Order of Santiago, a position princely in its revenues and military power.

When death claimed its royal victim at Algeciras, the whole aspect of Castile was changed. Amid public acclamations King Pedro rode forth from Seville with Queen Maria to pick up the reins of government that his mother's rival had let fall. Leonor de Guzman in contrast, seeking help in the hour of Alfonso's death from the courtiers who had fawned upon her in his lifetime, now found no one who would even guard her castles or grant her more than a safe-conduct immediately violated, since, surrendering, she was placed in the power of her most hated enemy.

For a time Queen Maria held her hand. It was enough that the fallen favourite should follow in her train under guard, anticipating her fate. Then the hour struck, when King Pedro seemed safely established on his throne, outwardly at peace with his young half-brothers and supported by the all-powerful minister, Don Juan de Albuquerque, who had been his father's chosen councillor.

No one would any longer question Maria's vengeance, and so she decreed her rival's death. A chronicler of that day describes the parting of

Leonor de Guzman and Fadrique the Master of Santiago.

"The mother took her son, the Master, to her arms and kissed him, and wept with him for a full hour and he with her; and they spoke not a word to one another. Then those who guarded Doña Leonor told the Master that he must come to the King, and he obeyed them, and he never saw his mother again after that day."

Leonor de Guzman left the Court that evening under guard for Talavera "de la Reyna," "of the Queen" as it is still called because of the death warrant signed by Maria of Portugal that exacted final vengeance on her helpless rival within the castle walls.

"Dost thou know, Don Tello," said the King to Doña Leonor's third son, "that thy mother is dead?"

"Sire!" answered the boy with the servility of terror. "I have no other father or mother than your Grace."

This attitude the rest of the de Guzmans adopted, but underneath their loyal protestations hatred smouldered.

We have talked of Leonor and her children and of Maria of Portugal, but the key to the future lay in the fifteen-year-old king. Don Pedro at this time was a youth well-knit and supple with dark red hair and blue eyes. We read of him that he was also an indefatigable hunter, despising sleep and elaborate food, indifferent to culture or manners, overbearing to his courtiers, passionate and self-centred.

Such a nature had possibilities for good as well as evil, but the temptations of mediaeval kingship were to develop what was bad, absorption in personal desires, a sense of limitless power, suspicion of others' motives, avarice and unchecked anger; all the germs, in fact,



that unite to breed that worst and most despicable of all vices, deliberate cruelty.

For four years Don Pedro allowed Don Juan de Albuquerque to govern for him, sitting himself an almost silent figure in the council-chamber and at executions. His interest at this time was still mainly in hunting, but also in the society of Doña Maria de Padilla, a beautiful Portuguese girl to whom he gave the place at Court Leonor de Guzman had enjoyed in the time of his father.

Old Albuquerque rubbed his hands with satisfaction at the sight. It was he who had introduced Maria de Padilla, a penniless orphan, but "the handsomest damsel in the world," to the young king's notice, hoping through her gratitude and influence to perpetuate his own power. Satisfied that he had achieved this ambition he turned his attention to public affairs, and suggested an alliance between Castile and France. This, he declared, must be cemented by a marriage between his royal master and the King of France's niece, Blanche of Bourbon, a fifteen-year-old princess, of whose looks and character he had received very favourable accounts from Spanish representatives at the French Court.

Pedro at once raised objections. Blanche of Bourbon might be as good and beautiful as any woman in the world, but he did not wish to marry her. Nevertheless, Don Juan de Albuquerque, strong in the wisdom of his project, persisted in maintaining it. For this and that political reason he argued the marriage was a necessity, and in season and out of season pressed the King to agree with him and consent.

At last, either convinced for the moment or from

sheer boredom, Don Pedro did consent, and, having signed the letter that sought the hand of the French princess in marriage, retired to sulk in the country with Maria de Padilla, while his minister carried on the subsequent negotiations in his absence.

Here was laid the foundation of one of the tragedies of history, for Blanche of Bourbon, still almost a child in years, was torn from her home and borne across the mountains into Spain with every display of ceremony and rejoicing, only to find that the bridegroom to whom she had been promised refused even to meet her, dallying instead at Torrijos with a party of his boon companions.

In vain Albuquerque sent urgent messengers, complaining of the insult offered to France as well as to the princess by this delay. Don Pedro did not wish to come: he was not accustomed even to consider what he did not wish . . . and so the months passed until the old minister himself appeared in the royal presence, and frightened the gay young courtiers and their master into a temporary recognition of their responsibilities. He then led Don Pedro back with him to Valladolid.

When the wedding at last took place all the Court remarked the sullen apathy of the young bridegroom. Forced to marry against his desire, he conceived a violent dislike for the gentle Blanche and showed his feelings so plainly that popular rumour declared that he had been bewitched. It was also whispered that Don Pedro did not intend to remain at Valladolid even sufficiently long to satisfy State etiquette; and the Queen Mother, hearing this, rushed to her son's presence almost in tears and begged him to reflect upon the imprudence of such a step.

"Consider," she said, "what an affront it will be to the King of France who has just sent you his niece with so much state. . . . Would you leave her at the very moment you have been united to her at the Holy Altar?"

"Why do you listen to these idle rumours?" interrupted the King angrily. "I have no intention of quitting Valladolid," but almost as soon as his mother had gone he called for his attendants and mules and set out from the town secretly towards Montalvan, where he had arranged that Maria de Padilla should meet him.

From this moment Don Juan de Albuquerque realised the edifice of his own supremacy was built on sand. Both Don Pedro and Maria de Padilla openly resented any control: he suspected they went further, and in their dislike of his tutorship were plotting his downfall with his enemies Count Henry of Trastamara and his brothers. Determined to put his suspicions to the test, he collected a large following of knights and men-at-arms and set out for Toledo, where the Court was in residence, prepared to overawe the young element of revolt if he could not govern by its goodwill.

At a short distance from the city, however, a royal messenger met him. The King, he was given to understand, had the protection of an armed force still larger than his own. . . .

"He has as great a respect for your experience, my lord, now as ever," added the man smoothly, "and you may safely appear before him, but he is surprised that you are attended by so numerous a retinue. He begs you to dismiss your attendants."

While Don Juan hesitated to reply to this possible threat, he was drawn aside to listen to one of his partisans from Toledo who had come in haste with a secret warning.

“Do not comply with the King’s request, my lord,” he said earnestly, “or it will certainly be to witness your ruin, if not to meet your death.”

Impressed by his manner, the old minister determined to act with caution. He therefore sent a dignified answer by the hand of his major-domo, or steward, recounting his past services and loyalty and affirming his ignorance of any crime that could be laid to his charge. As soon as he was made aware of what he was accused he would clear his character, but in the meantime he declined to appear like a prisoner at the bar of judgment.

“He is free to retire where he will,” said Don Pedro coldly, when he was told. “Nevertheless he would have done well to trust in my clemency.” In the light of after events we must deem Don Juan de Albuquerque right in refusing to believe this statement. Exile in Portugal was certainly preferable to existing on the capricious favour of a self-willed youth.

The young King was now his own master, and, though so much evil resulted from his personal rule that his reign is remembered as one of the blackest in Spanish history, yet not all his deeds were stained by the lust for blood and senseless ferocity that fouled his later years. There was even at first a trace of shrewdness and an elementary notion of justice that won the affection of his poorer subjects.

Four lawyers of almost equal reputation, we are told, went one day to the Royal Palace that the King might

choose himself a judge from amongst their number. Don Pedro led them out into the garden, and as they strolled and talked he carelessly cut an orange from a tree, and, slitting it in half, ate one piece while he threw the other into the basin of a fountain at his feet.

"What is that?" he asked the lawyers, pointing to the fruit as it floated by.

"Why, an orange, sire!" exclaimed three of them instantaneously, but the fourth answered more slowly, as he picked it out and examined it:

"It is half an orange, sire."

"Here is my judge!" said the King, laughing, and clapped him on the shoulder.

On another occasion the civic authorities of Seville found themselves in a very awkward predicament. There had been a street duel one dark night, not an unusual affair, but the awkwardness lay in the fact that the young gallant who had killed his rival and then made good his escape had been recognised by an old woman, through the cracking of his knee joints, as no less a personage than the King himself.

"Very good! But how will you punish me?" demanded the culprit, who knew that the customary sentence for such a crime was that the guilty man should be beheaded and his head exposed on the place where the affair had taken place.

The Governor of Seville looked nonplussed. His only suggestion was that the old woman who had been foolish enough to give evidence should be severely punished, for it was obvious if she had kept silence the whole business could have been hushed up.

"No!" said the King. "That would be false justice, but I will show you what we will do," and he



ordered a model of his head to be carved in stone and placed in a niche in the street in Seville where the duel was fought. He also sent a sum of money to the old woman as a reward for her honesty.

The tale would hardly satisfy modern equity, but it pleased the ordinary man and woman in Seville as much as the sentence he passed on a shoemaker accused of attacking a priest with a dagger. At the trial it was proved that some years before the priest had insulted and murdered the shoemaker's sister, and this had led to the act of revenge.

"Well, what sentence did the priest receive in the Ecclesiastical Courts?" demanded the King.

He was told that the man had been found guilty and forbidden to say Mass for a year.

"If that is so," said the King to the shoemaker, "then this is thy sentence. . . . For a whole year shalt thou refrain from making shoes."

By this judgment Don Pedro wished to show his contempt for the way in which the Ecclesiastical Courts too often abused the freedom from royal control they had obtained during the years of anarchy in Castile. Unfortunately he forgot that what may be a good cause can be ruined by a bad advocate. If his subjects, clerical as well as lay, were unscrupulous in trying to twist public affairs to their own advantage none excelled the young King in this art when impulse or ambition dictated.

Far from resting content to dismiss from their offices the friends and servants of the fallen Don Juan de Albuquerque, Don Pedro seized their private lands and revenues, bestowing them as marks of his favour on Maria de Padilla's greedy Court. Next, on the pretext

of the resistance offered by some of the nobles he had thus shamelessly evicted, the King accused Albuquerque himself of deliberate treachery, and marched into his territory, demanding the surrender of his principal towns and fortresses.

Exiled in Portugal, the ex-minister learned of these acts of aggression first with dismay, and then with growing fury and a desire for revenge. To whom should he turn for assistance?

Looking round, he learned to his surprise, through secret messengers, that the sons of Leonor de Guzman, outwardly the King's most servile friends and his own bitter enemies, were in reality anxious for reconciliation that they might form a League to dominate the Government in their own interests and avenge their mother's death.

"Let us dethrone Don Pedro," was their first suggestion, but later the rebels modified this programme into an insistence that the King should promise to rule henceforth at the dictation of his barons, send away Maria de Padilla, and reinstate the unfortunate Queen Blanche, who had been kept a prisoner since her wedding-day.

Don Juan de Albuquerque himself would gladly have seen Don Pedro dead.

"Make no truce with the King," he urged from the moment open hostilities began; and when after some months he fell ill and knew himself to be dying, he called his friends and followers to his bedside and made them swear to see his wrongs righted. . . .

"When I am dead, carry my body at the head of your army wherever it goes as long as the war lasts. Do not bury me until it is finished and I am avenged.

Then all those present, we are told, took an oath that they would obey Don Juan's last command: and they placed his body in a coffin covered with a pall of cloth of gold, and set it upon a cart; and everywhere the rebel army marched the ghost of the fallen minister seemed to preside over its actions, infusing energy and determination.

From the first Don Pedro's cause languished: Castilian nobles indeed looked askance at a young monarch so obviously intent on proving himself master in his own kingdom, and thus lent a ready ear to the De Guzmans' widespread whispers of bribery and freedom from royal control.

To a campaign of skirmishes and surprise attacks on fortresses and walled towns in no way decisive, succeeded interminable negotiations; but during the course of these Don Pedro discovered that even those barons, in whose fidelity he had trusted most, were his secret enemies, waiting to bring about his subjection.

Toro, his last stronghold of any importance, the Queen Mother sold to one of the Infantes of Aragon, a member of the League, at the instigation of a Portuguese knight whose opinion she valued more than her son's. Thus betrayed on all sides, with only a body-guard of some one hundred men-at-arms, who showed little enthusiasm at the idea of running their necks into a noose in the cause of loyalty, the King surrendered at last to his foes.

With fury and bitterness in his heart he returned to Toro, and was received as he arrived, travel-stained and almost unattended, by the leaders of the League magnificently dressed and well armed. While they overwhelmed him with protestations of devotion they

planned amongst themselves the means by which they would in future bend him to their will, and then dictated their terms with veiled insolence.

The Queen of Aragon, Don Pedro's aunt, a garrulous old lady, openly blamed her nephew's past conduct, but declared that she felt the guilt lay with those who had given him bad advice. . . .

"It is not your fault, youth that you are; it is all through these wicked men who have corrupted you. . . . We will now have them removed and place about you men of character who will care for your honour as well as your interests."

Helplessly the King watched the few nobles for whom he had any affection stripped of their offices and lands; while Count Henry of Trastamara and his brothers strolled smiling into the royal presence when and where they wished, almost as courted and arrogant as in the days when their mother, Leonor de Guzman, had flaunted her power over Alfonso XI, and the heir to the throne had remained neglected at Seville.

"May God be merciful to you!" cried the young King to the Count, his half-brother. "For my part I pardon you"; but deep in his heart was no pardon as he memorised the names of all who had in any way insulted or betrayed him. Fortune might yet turn her face, and Pedro of Castile would not in that hour forget to pay his debts.

The League in their triumph had no fear of such a reckoning. They held the King under observation day and night, one of the Master of Santiago's most trusted servants even slept in his room . . . . he was a prisoner, helpless, fettered by the silken chains of Court etiquette twisted to the League's pattern. With

the conscious satisfaction of a vow fulfilled, the De Guzmans buried Don Juan de Albuquerque at last—the fallen minister was avenged.



## CHAPTER IX

### *PEDRO "THE CRUEL"*

DON JUAN DE ALBUQUERQUE slept in his grave: the allies, to whom he had bequeathed the task of ruling the young King, controlled the kingdom, divided its political spoils, quarrelled over the choicest morsels, and gradually came to ignore their royal prisoner, while he watched them from heavy-lidded eyes and held his peace.

What did his silence hold in store—deep-laid schemes or mere helplessness? They did not care. Don Pedro might be an eagle, but an eagle with cut wings, caged, is no more a king of birds save to the philosopher or ornithologist. If months of contempt and neglect ate like iron into a soul already festered with self-love and suspicion, the Court at Toro was not interested in character-study but only in acquiring offices and revenues. It therefore bowed with mock ceremony to the silent figure who represented a throne and passed on its way light-heartedly, content to leave him an enigma.

The King went a-hunting—he often hunted in the woods near Toro with some two hundred horsemen to keep him from straying far from his prison; but on this day in question there rode at his right hand a Jew, Don Simuel El Levi, who had bribed the bodyguard to include him amongst their company. Now this Levi was a royalist and had worked early and late for his master since his surrender to the League, stirring up popular indignation in his favour throughout the

country, and taking advantage of the quarrels amongst the rebel leaders to detach some of the malcontents with bribes and promises.

Through his agency the young King could now count his cousins, the Infantes of Aragon, grown jealous of the Count of Trastamara, amongst his secret supporters—the fortress of Segovia was ready to open its gates and receive him—indeed it only lacked the presence of majesty to take the field and change the whole aspect of Castile.

As the hunting grew ever faster and the day drew towards its close, the King and a few of his bodyguard separated from the rest; yet the rest were not over-anxious since they knew he rode a horse as weary as their own. Soon they would find him as usual and bring him back like a dog on a chain, but here they reckoned without the Jew. At a certain spot, arranged by El Levi, stood a knight with a fresh horse and lance, and the King leaving his tired steed remounted and turned to his dismayed attendants.

“Let him follow who chooses,” he exclaimed, “and the rest return, for I go another way.”

Within a short time he was free, a king once more in the Alcazar, or palace, at Segovia, and to the royal banner he set upon the battlements flocked all those knights and nobles who realised that public opinion had during the last few months veered into the royal quarter, together with such barons as had found cause of quarrel with the League.

The Count and his brothers on their side, recovering from the surprise and confusion into which their puppet’s escape had thrown them, gathered together an army and marched on Toledo, the chief military stronghold

in Castile, ostensibly to rescue Queen Blanche, a prisoner within its walls, though up till this time they had forgotten her, and the League's original promise to restore her to her throne.

"The Queen has nothing to fear—we will protect her," declared the leading citizens of Toledo stoutly, for they only asked to be left in peace and therefore refused to open their gates. The Count of Trastamara, however, forced an entrance by one of the bridges, and his mercenary troops spent the night pillaging the Jewish quarter and burning its inhabitants alive.

Now Don Pedro had a name for favouring the Jews (like other kings he found them a useful sponge to squeeze, wringing gold instead of water from their dependence on his goodwill), so messengers were hastily despatched to seek his aid, and soon the royal army arrived upon the scene and after some skirmishing drove out the Leaguers.

Toledo, as it happened, did not gain much by the exchange, for Don Pedro's soldiery was as wild and rapacious as its rival, and its royal commander, in the mood of some caged lion suddenly set free to wreak his anger, demanded the heads of twenty-two of the principal burghers as an offset to the Jewish massacre. There was small mercy for anyone in fourteenth century Castile, none at all for the helpless, however innocent, and Queen Blanche was removed from the care of the Toledans first to Sigüenza and then to the sterner prison of Jerez in Andalusia, where she remained shut away from the outside world as in some living tomb.

For the time being she was less in Don Pedro's thoughts than others against whom he had vowed

vengeance, the half-brothers Henry of Trastamara, Don Fadrique, and Don Tello, who had made a mock of his dignity, and the mother who had sold his last fortress to the League to please the Portuguese Don Martin Tello.

Toledo captured, Toro, where a number of these enemies had fortified themselves, was his next objective, but the King found he had no money to carry on a long campaign.

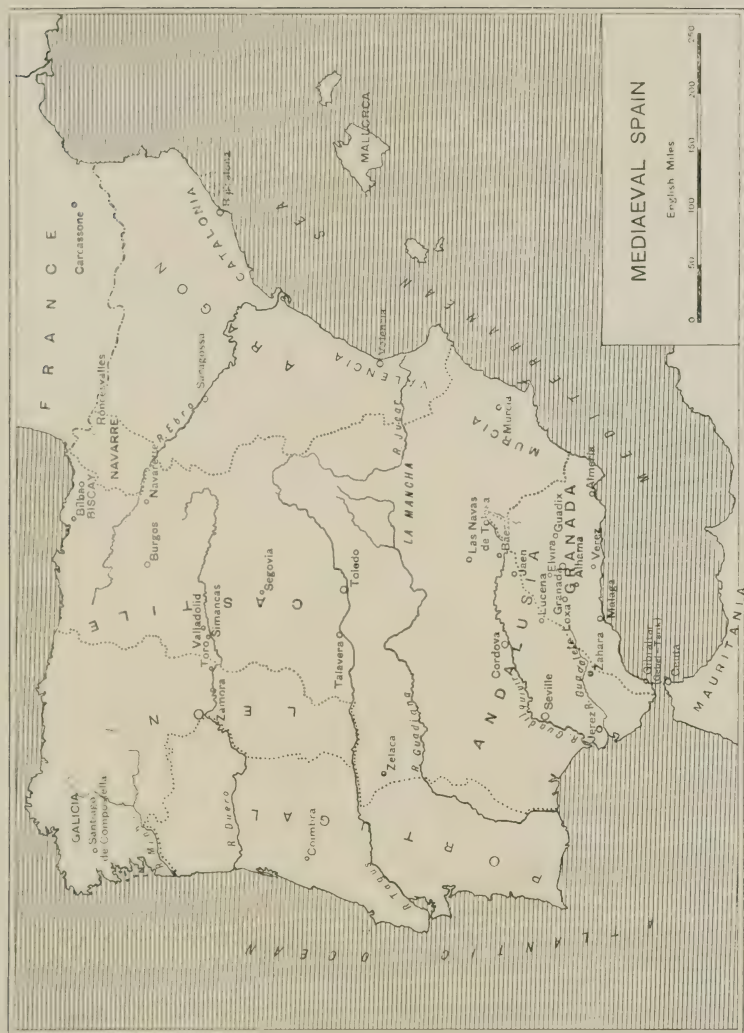
Playing at dice one day with his courtiers, he was forced to stop because he had no more in his treasury than some twenty thousand doubloons.

"See!" he complained discontentedly, "this is all the gold and silver that I possess."

Simuel El Levi, who had been watching the play, drew him aside.

"Sire," he whispered, "do not lose heart. Only authorise me to treat with your officers of finance and entrust me with two of your castles and I promise you that ere long you shall have in each a larger amount of gold than is contained in that casket."

"Do as you say and I will reward you," answered the King. So the Jew departed, and by threats of torture and imprisonment he forced all the officials who collected taxes to give him the arrears they had neglected to pay into the royal treasury while the kingdom was in a state of anarchy. With part of this money he paid off Don Pedro's debts, inducing creditors to accept half instead of the whole amount on the hint that otherwise they might receive nothing at all. This fraudulent transaction concluded, a great quantity of gold and silver still remained in the two castles, and El Levi thereupon handed this treasure





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over to his master whom his cunning had made the richest of all rulers in the peninsula.

The reduction of Toro was now a mere matter of time, and, hearing that the royal army was on the march towards that fortress the leaders of the League became seriously alarmed: Henry of Trastamara removed himself to a place of greater safety, while some of the garrison began to negotiate a secret surrender.

As Don Pedro approached the walls, riding along the banks of the Duero, he saw in the distance a body of knights encamped on an island in the midst of the stream. So also did one of his bodyguard, Juan de Hinestrosa, who recognised Don Fadrique, Master of Santiago, amongst the number, and thereupon spurred his horse down the bank towards the level of the water.

"Sir Master," he called aloud, ". . . God is my witness there is no man to whom I consider myself more beholden than to you, and I would do anything to prove my gratitude, consistent with the loyalty due to the King your brother. You are in great danger. I adjure you in the presence of these knights, your companions, to follow my advice. . . ."

"What is the counsel you would give me?" demanded the Master uneasily, for he saw the King "Can I abandon the Queen who has placed herself under my protection?"

"Sir Master, I only do my duty. Take my word that if you do not at once implore the King's mercy you are in danger of death: I dare say no more."

Then Don Fadrique's voice trembled as he asked: "Can I indeed be sure of my lord the King's forgiveness?" and to this Don Pedro, who had been listening intently, answered himself:

“ Brother, Hinestrosa is an honest man and counsels you well. Throw yourself on my mercy and I will pardon you . . . but no delay. Come at once!”

Then those who were watching the scene from the fortress across the river saw Don Fadrique ford the stream from the island and, sinking on his knees, kiss the King’s hands. There was a moment’s silence, and, as the truth struck home, a wail of the lost along the battlements. . . .

“ Betrayed! Betrayed! The Master deserts us.”

That night Toro opened its gates to the royalists, and the Queen Mother, and Don Martin Tello her favourite, and the Countess of Trastamara Count Henry’s wife, and Don Juan de Guzman the King’s half-brother a boy of twelve, and those nobles of the League who had neither made their peace nor escaped, fled into the castle and endeavoured to obtain a safe-conduct before they would surrender.

“ Let her come immediately! I know what I have to do,” said the King coldly, when he received his mother’s petition for mercy; and so at last she came and those who had sheltered with her, but there was no sign of Don Pedro, only two lines of spearmen, one on either side of the gateway, and beyond them a howling mob.

Don Juan the boy passed this ordeal unscathed, safe for the moment, and the terrified women were also spared their lives, but Don Martin Tello was butchered clinging to the Queen’s skirt, and with him the Castilian nobles who had once dared to terrorise and betray a king.

Without hesitation, it may be said, these traitors deserved their fate, the Queen Mother, banished from

Court to a distant castle, as much as any. The danger for Castile lay not in the justice wrought at Toro, but in a Don Pedro who had tasted blood and understood only too well he was now free to take toll of his enemies from Gibraltar to the Pyrenees. Henceforth the permanent warp his character had received during those months of betrayal and imprisonment by the League was to become abundantly clear—the suspicion that recognised no friendship or loyalty, the craving for revenge that could bide its time to strike treacherously, the joy in bloodshed for its own sake without the softening influence of generosity or pity. Don Pedro "the Cruel" he remains from this date onwards in the history of Spain.

Some love the tyrant preserved for Maria de Padilla, partner of his misfortunes as of his moments of triumph, but even her pleading was of no avail to protect those he had determined to slay.

Chief victim on his proscribed list was his brother, the Master of Santiago, whose fears he had lulled with false promises of pardon on the banks of the Duero. The sands of Don Fadrique's life had nearly run their course by royal decree while he still rode at ease through the streets of Seville or wandered through the palace, exchanging courteous words and jests with an outwardly complacent host.

"To-day I mean to kill him," said Don Pedro one morning to his cousin, the Infante Don Juan of Aragon, whom he had summoned to his private cabinet. . . . "I ask your assistance, and by giving it you will render me a service. As soon as Fadrique is dead I set off for Biscay, where I propose to treat Don Tello likewise. I shall then give you his lands in Biscay."

Don Juan's eyes glistened covetously.

"Sire," he answered, "I feel grateful for your confidence. . . . It is true that I hate the Master of Santiago and his brothers. They also detest me on account of the love I bear to you. I am, therefore, pleased to hear that you have resolved to rid yourself of the Master. If you desire it, I myself will slay him."

"Cousin, I thank you, and pray you to do as you say."

Thus the two plotted; and some rumour of impending horror escaping, word was brought to the Master of Santiago as he entered Seville that morning that his life was in danger; but he looked at his large retinue of knights and men-at-arms, and with a confident laugh brushed the warning on one side.

When he reached the palace he was shown into the King's presence and found him at chess, and the two exchanged greetings; and then the Master, having kissed Don Pedro's hand, retired to pay his respects to Maria de Padilla. To his surprise she showed signs of great uneasiness, and her eyes filled with tears as she looked at him, but she dared not utter the caution on her lips, and Don Fadrique, still unsuspecting, left her and summoned a knight belonging to his retinue to bring his mule to the main gateway.

"My lord," said the man, alarmed by various signs he had noticed in the palace while he waited, "the postern gate is open. Once out of the alcazar, and you will find your mule. I pray you leave the Court."

While the Master hesitated, a page appeared to say the King desired to see his brother once more before he left the palace; and Don Fadrique turned and entered the royal apartment that fronted on a small



courtyard. A sliding panel door closed behind him.

"Pero Lopez," cried Don Pedro, turning at this signal to one of his bodyguard of macebearers, "Arrest the Master!" and the man, catching Fadrique by the arm said:

"Sir, you are my prisoner."

"Guard, slay the Master!"

At these words Don Fadrique, who had at first stood rooted to the floor with surprise, stepped back to avoid the raised mace, and felt for the long sword he wore under his cloak, but the hilt had become entangled with his belt. In vain, as he fumbled, he ran this way and that the length of the courtyard; he could not draw his weapon. Stumbling, he fell at last beneath a heavy blow from one of the macebearers.

Don Pedro stepped into the courtyard and bent over his victim—he found him yet alive.

"Despatch him!" he said to a Moorish slave, and handed the man his dagger. Then he ordered food and wine, and, with his brother's corpse lying but a few yards away, sat down to eat.

According to the scheme arranged with Don Juan of Aragon, he set out for the North immediately after this meal, taking that prince with him: but when he reached Biscay it was to find that Don Tello, already informed of his elder brother's fate, had fled overseas. Angry at his failure, Don Pedro looked round for another victim to sate his lust for blood. Biscayans there were in plenty, but against these citizens he bore no grudge, preferring to gain their goodwill by flattery and promises, so that they came to look on him for the time as a God-given ruler.

This part, so ill-suited to his real character, served

his plans, and he smiled ironically when his Aragonese cousin, who found no pleasure in paying court to rude mountaineers and pompous burghers, came to demand the lordship of Biscay that was to be his reward for his complicity in the Master's murder.

"We will ask the Diet their opinion," said Don Pedro, and of the assembled deputies of the province who had come to pay him their respects he enquired whether they were willing to accept this foreign prince as their natural lord from henceforth.

"Never shall Biscay have any other lord than the King of Castile," they shouted in unison, at which the King turned to his angry cousin in mock surprise.

"At Bilbao, the principal town in the lordship, I shall more easily persuade the Biscayans to render you their homage," he whispered soothingly, and the two rode to Bilbao.

By this time Pedro was bored with teasing a fool; and when Don Juan called to see him the morning after their arrival it was to find himself under arrest. His sword and dagger were torn from him, and the next minute a heavy blow from a mace struck him to the ground, dead.

"Biscayans, behold him who pretended to be your lord," cried the royal guard as they flung the corpse from the balcony into the crowded square below; and the mob cheered the spectacle as if they had shared in an act of justice against a traitor.

The Master of Santiago and Don Juan of Aragon were but leaders in a long line of victims of Don Pedro's capricious fits of cruelty, a few worthy of death but many guiltless: the old Queen of Aragon, Doña Leonor, mother of Don Juan, her daughter-in-

law Don Juan's wife; Isabel de Lara, wife of Don Tello, the lads Juan and Pedro, the King's half-brothers, of whom the younger was barely fourteen.

"All those who loved the King's service," says Ayala, the historian, "heard with sorrow of this sanguinary execution, for what had these young princes done to deserve death?"

Still louder was the cry of horror when it became known in Castile that Queen Blanche, a prisoner since her wedding-day ten years before, had perished in the gloomy castle of Jerez. According to tales of the time, Inigo Ortiz, governor of the fortress, received instructions to administer poison in the Queen's food, but boldly refused.

"As long as this castle is under my command," he said stoutly, "I will allow no attempt on the life of my sovereign."

A few weeks later he was replaced by one of the royal bodyguard, a rough fellow without scruples or soft feelings, and with this change of gaoler Queen Blanche's death-warrant was sealed and fulfilled. She died a helpless victim of the passions of others—a tide too strong and pitiless for her to stem; and the memory of her end would stain Pedro's character black as night were there no other acts of cruelty that could with good evidence be laid to his charge.

Castile had watched the murder of Don Fadrique with comparative calmness, and shrugged its shoulders at Don Juan of Aragon's fate: both these Infantes were political adventurers whose own acts of violence and treachery had invited disaster. Their ruin did not touch the heart of the nation; but as victim was added to victim—the undistinguished citizen to the noble and

prince, women and boys to statesmen and soldiers, popular fear and indignation awoke. Don Pedro ceased to be regarded as the stern giver of justice that his more simple-minded subjects had once deemed him, and the passive loyalty of the masses broke into sporadic rebellions.

These outbreaks the King was at first able to suppress without difficulty, burning alive their leaders or boiling them in jars. Yet it seemed to his suspicion, fed anew by each act of disloyalty and subsequent orgy of revenge in which he indulged, that there was no one he could now trust, not even Simuel El Levi who had set him free at Toro and filled his treasury. Thus the old Jew was tortured by royal orders, in order to make him reveal suspected hordes of gold and silver, and perished miserably on the rack.

With such a madman loose the air of Castile became heavy with the menace of tyranny, while without the borders the numerous enemies of the tyrant plotted his downfall at the Courts of Aragon and of France. Their leader was "the Count," Henry of Trastamara, who had escaped the fate of the Master of Santiago by seeking refuge beyond the Pyrenees as soon as the fortunes of the League began to wane. As a captain of mercenaries in the pay of the French King he had distinguished himself during some of the earlier campaigns of the Hundred Years' War.

By the Treaty of Brétigny, signed between France and England in 1360, he and other members of the "Free Companies," who had held France in thrall for so many years, were suddenly deprived of occupation or of any prospect of pay.

Froissart the Chronicler says of them: "Having

been brought up to arms and taught to live on pillage and plunder alone, they would not or could not abstain from it," a description from which the inference may be drawn that if these mercenaries could not live at the expense of an enemy they would undoubtedly turn and rend their friends.

France, if she was to enjoy peace, must at all costs be rid of their presence. This the French King well understood, but when he suggested to their leaders a crusade in Hungary, the Companies firmly declined to consider the proposal. . . . Hungary was too far off; besides, there was a sea voyage, and they were men-at-arms not sailors.

In this hour of crisis, Henry of Trastamara interposed with a different suggestion. Let the Free Companies help him to dethrone his brother, and when they had gained him the crown there would be money and lands in Spain to spare for everyone. ("The Count" was always an optimist.)

The French commander, Bertrand du Guesclin, to whom the scheme was communicated, at once smiled on it favourably. A Breton of high lineage, small but powerfully built, ugly, clever, and a born soldier, he lived but for two objects, the din of war and the honour of France. This project seemed to satisfy both ambitions; and, popular with all who followed his banner, he had little difficulty in making them see the matter in the same light.

"In Spain," he said, "both profit and glory await you. You will there find a rich and avaricious king, who possesses great treasures, is the ally of Saracens; in fact, is half a pagan himself: it is proposed to conquer his kingdom and to bestow it upon the Count



of Trastamara, an old comrade of yours, a good lance as you all know, and a gentle and generous knight who will share with you that land which you will win for him from the Jews and Moslems of that wicked King Don Pedro. Come, comrades, let us honour God and shame the devil!"

This speech aroused tremendous enthusiasm, mainly on account of the speaker.

"Messire Bertrand," the crowd whispered, "gives all that he wins to his men-at-arms. He is the father of the soldier. Let us march with him."

Soon a large army, composed of the most dreaded warriors in Europe, was on its way to the Eastern Pyrenees, and shortly afterwards Castile learned with horror that Aragon had welcomed the invaders as allies, offering them every facility to reach their desired zone of war.

Don Pedro, who was at Burgos in the North, fled southwards at his brother's approach. It was obvious from his brooding silence broken by fits of rage that he deemed his cause already lost. Whom could he trust in such a crisis? Not the nobles and knights whose relations he had murdered, not the citizens whom he had fleeced, not an army intimidated by the mere reputation of the Free Companies and most reluctant to take the field.

At Seville, his capital, he stayed for a time as though to plan some kind of resistance, but a rebellion in the city, where the hostile populace prepared to storm the Alcazar, caused him to mount his horse and with a small company of knights and men-at-arms make his escape secretly towards the Portuguese border. The King of Portugal had been his ally, he had sought his

daughter's hand in marriage for his son, but now he seemed to have forgotten all past obligations. The Castilian exile found his daughter repudiated, himself scorned, and with black rage in his heart turned away without a refuge.

As he lodged one night in a miserable inn, a knight belonging to his bodyguard saw him take some gold pieces from his pocket and savagely throw them over the roof.

"Sire," he remonstrated, "why sow such inhospitable soil? It were better to keep the money to pay one of thy servants."

Don Pedro turned on him, his mouth twisted in a bitter smile.

"Yes, truly I sow now," he exclaimed, "but be assured one day I shall return and reap."

Revenge was never far from this king's thoughts, and, unfortunately, it was through an English prince, by repute the greatest soldier and gentleman of his day, that he was enabled to fulfil his heart's desire, or otherwise Henry of Trastamara, who had conquered his kingdom almost without a blow, might have ruled Castile undisturbed as Henry II.

By the treaty of Brétigny, England, while surrendering her claim to the northern provinces of France, had been ceded the fertile regions of Guienne and Gascony in the south, and these Edward of Wales, the famous "Black Prince," ruled from his capital of Bordeaux, bored by the strange atmosphere of peace in which he found himself.

"He was at this time in the full vigour of youth," says Froissart, "and had never been weary or satiated with war since the first time he bore arms but was

always looking forward to some achievement of high renown."

How could he gain more renown than by restoring a rightful king to the throne, the more that the usurper was sustained by the hated armies of France?

So argued Don Pedro the exile, discounting the numberless crimes that had led to his downfall as mere malicious gossip, but the English lords in Guienne, when they were shown his letter of appeal, shook their heads, unconvinced.

"It means you will have to melt down your gold and silver, Sir," they said to their master, "to distribute liberally among the Companies who are to serve under you in this expedition, and who from affection to you alone will engage to do so, for as to Don Pedro they will do nothing on his account."

The Black Prince frowned as one objection after another was raised to the proposed alliance. From the moment it was suggested he had set his heart on the Spanish expedition, and "no one could afterwards make the smallest change in his determination, but every day it grew firmer." Base and cruel Don Pedro might prove, but by birth he was a king, and Edward's punctilious mind could see no further than the letter of the law of chivalry. A king must reign, his subjects must pay him obedience, and if they failed in this duty it was to the interest of other rulers to punish their disloyalty. That the affairs of Castile were no concern of an English prince, or that there is a law of humanity above codes of chivalry are political arguments belonging to a later age than the fourteenth century.

Once arrived in Guienne, Don Pedro, concealing with an effort the sullen ferocity that was by this time

his second nature, made quite a good impression. To Edward he was full of specious promises not only of the free pardon he would grant his misguided subjects once they had returned to their true allegiance, but of gracious gifts—to the Prince himself the lordship of Biscay, to the nobles and men-at-arms who should win back his throne large stores of gold and silver.

"The Knights," says Froissart, "paid a willing attention to these words, for both English and Gascons are by nature of a covetous disposition."

The Prince of Wales himself was delighted at the thought of obtaining a seaboard province in northern Spain. Presumably he did not know of a similar offer made to the Infante Juan of Aragon a few years before, nor of the spirit in which that promise had been kept, but had he done so the truth would not have sufficed to cool his adventurous mood. From the pages of Froissart we may glean the full history of his campaign in Spain—here we can only take up the record on the battlefield of Navarette, where the English forces, superior both in number and military experience to the army of Henry of Trastamara, drove their enemies before them in headlong flight.

Du Guesclin himself was taken prisoner, and with him numberless Castilian nobles and knights who stood trembling while Don Pedro glowered down upon them from his black charger.

The King's mood was bitter in spite of the overwhelming victory his allies had gained for him, since he had just learned that his brother had escaped alive from the *mêlée*.

"Then nothing is done!" he cried aloud, and as his glance fell on the prisoners he demanded of the Black

Prince that he should be allowed to pay their ransoms.

"I will induce them to remain in my service. Otherwise I shall find them still the bitterest of my enemies."

Now Edward of Wales understood his ally a great deal better than during their first meetings in Guienne, and disgust had begun to tarnish the chivalrous joy he first experienced in helping a fallen monarch.

"Let not your Majesty be displeased," he said, "but you have no right to make this demand. These nobles, knights, or men-at-arms in my service fought for honour, and their prisoners are at their disposal. For all the gold in the world my knights would not deliver them up to you, knowing well that your only motive for asking for these unfortunate men is that you may put them to death."

At this Don Pedro's temper, always near the edge, gave way. "If such be your determination," he shouted, "I hold my kingdom more completely lost to me than it was yesterday. If you let these men live you have done nothing for me."

"Sir cousin," interposed the Black Prince so coldly that for the moment he silenced his companion, "there are other means for recovering your kingdom than those by which you have thought to preserve Castile," and he proceeded to read a lecture on the royal duties of forgiveness and benevolence. Aware that bluster would not help his case, the Castilian King at last recovered sufficient command of his features to pretend that he agreed with his mentor.

"Out of respect for you," he said to the prince, "I am willing to pardon the disloyalty of these men, but



only on the condition that they will bind themselves to my cause by a public oath of fidelity."

Then the Black Prince asked the prisoners if they were willing to return to their true allegiance; and they, seeing no other choice but compliance, answered submissively that such was their only desire in life. In outward humility they knelt to kiss Don Pedro's hand, proffering him a fidelity they did not feel in return for a pardon they did not trust. The tragic futility of this scene is in keeping with the whole Spanish expedition, glorious in its pomp and surface victory, worthless, nay, disastrous in its results.

The Mirror of Chivalry had restored a lawful sovereign to his throne and reconciled his rebellious subjects. As at the head of his army he rode into Burgos in the wake of his ally, peace of mind and thanksgiving should have been his reward: instead he suffered anxiety and depression, for his usual self-confidence was badly shaken.

Every day he learned more plainly by one token or another that Pedro of Castile, restored to his kingdom, cared scarce a snap of his fingers for Edward of Wales and his well-meant homilies. Already he had fallen into his old evil habits, and was busy putting men and women in prison or cutting off their heads. To complaints he turned a deaf ear or retaliated by counter reproaches on the conduct of the English soldiery, who were, he said, bringing his cause into discredit by their lack of discipline and taste for looting.

The Black Prince retorted on these occasions by pointing out that an army must live. Let Don Pedro keep his promise and distribute the gold and silver of which he had talked in Guienne, and there would be

no need for his allies to feed themselves at the public expense.

Again came specious promises (Don Pedro seems to have been an artist in this line of manufacture). . . . He alone knew where the treasure was hidden and must therefore go and find it himself . . . . of course, he would hasten to Seville and would return immediately . . . . in a few weeks it might be . . . . as soon, that is, as he could collect the money. . . . When he arrived all would be well, but in the meantime could not his dear cousin send home the greater part of his army since its services were no longer required?

Silence followed these discussions and the King's departure, four months during which no payment was made and the English troops fell victims to disease bred of a strange climate and an unwholesome life of inaction. What their enemies had been unable to do on the battlefield sickness accomplished like some avenging fire, and the Prince of Wales, stricken himself, was forced at last to acknowledge his failure. He, the hero of countless battles, had been checkmated by cunning aided by an ally stronger than human lance or brain. The stars in their courses had fought against him and prevailed.

In the autumn of 1367, without having again set eyes on his worthless protégé, he began his return journey, "bringing with him from Spain," says Mérimée, "scarce one-fifth of his brilliant army and the sterile glory he had acquired on the plains of Navarette."

Don Pedro openly rejoiced at this exodus, for though the English Prince's presence had been unable to effect a change in his heart it had nevertheless been

a slight check on his conduct. Henceforth he felt free to wreak his vengeance on all enemies within his border: "he had learned nothing from adversity, forgotten nothing."

At Burgos, Toledo, Cordova and Seville, he celebrated his home-coming by executions; indeed in his capital he exceeded his usual brutality by burning alive an old lady whose only offence was that her son had served Henry of Trastamara.

As a result of this policy of terrorism, "the Count," who during Pedro's exile had shown himself a kindly sovereign, became for the majority of Castilians a national hero, and numbers of nobles, knights, and citizens flocked to his banner when it was learned that on the departure of the Black Prince he had raised it anew in Spain. At first it was feared there would be no Bertrand du Guesclin to lead the French Companies, for that hero had been carried to Guienne after the battle of Navarette, but the wily Breton was a difficult man to keep in prison, at any rate by a gaoler as slow-witted as Edward of Wales.

One day, shortly after his return to France, the Prince sent for his famous prisoner and enquired after his health.

"I was never better in my life," answered the Breton. "And I ought to be well in truth, for I am, though your prisoner, the most honoured knight in the world."

"Indeed?" said the Prince surprised, for he believed that he himself should have been accorded the first place.

"Yes; for it is said throughout the kingdom of France that you dare not set me free."

The other's pride rose in revolt, as Du Guesclin had hoped, at the words "dare not."

"Messire Bertrand," he cried haughtily, "do you then imagine that we stand in such dread of your prowess? Fix yourself the amount of your ransom. Let it be but a rush of straw and I shall be satisfied."

Du Guesclin was satisfied also at the result of his manœuvre, for he knew a knight as honourable as the Black Prince would not break his word, but he also was not without his pride and a good measure of boastfulness.

"Poor knight that I am," he returned, "I shall find in the purse of my friends a hundred thousand golden florins, I do not doubt;" and if the chronicles speak true he was right in estimating his worth highly in French hearts. Very shortly the ransom was paid and he was free, and so he came to be found in the camp that Henry of Trastamara had established before the gates of Toledo.

While the garrison within starved on horseflesh, since their governor was one of Don Pedro's few loyal subjects, word was brought to the besieging force that their chief enemy had left his capital of Seville and was in the neighbourhood of Montiel.

Henry of Trastamara, Henry II, as he was called by a good part of Castile, did not hesitate, but, leaving his infantry to watch Toledo, set off southwards at the head of a large body of cavalry. Fortune favoured him, for as he cautiously approached Montiel he found that no one in the least expected his attack; indeed, Don Pedro's forces were scattered here and there through the neighbourhood in search of food. Lighting torches to show the rest of the army which

way they went Du Guesclin's Company of men-at-arms descended the mountains towards the town under cover of the night.

"My lord, there are moving fires on the mountains not two leagues distant," said the Governor of Montiel uneasily, and dragged Don Pedro from his bed to see them. The King for once was not perturbed, since he believed Henry of Trastamara safely encamped before Toledo, and deemed these lights but a small body of the enemy trying to escape his army in the dark. Having sent out spies, therefore, to reconnoitre, he retired tranquilly to sleep.

Once more he was awoken, this time at dawn, by messengers pallid with dismay, who swore that Henry of Trastamara was marching rapidly on the town. When the King reached the battlements the enemy was already in sight.

Monster of cruelty there is little doubt Don Pedro was, coward he was not. Within a few minutes he was fighting bravely in front of the Castle, but only to be borne back inside the gates by a rush of frightened fugitives. Those of the attacking force who had recognised his armour uttered jubilant shouts, and their lines drew in around his refuge like dogs about a wolf's lair.

Was there any hope of escape?

Pedro saw none, save one mere chance built on a friendship that existed between Men Rodriguez, a knight in his service, and his brother's chief commander, Bertrand du Guesclin. Perhaps, he argued, since the French warrior, despite his reputation, was after all but a mercenary, he could be bought twice. Many towns and lordships was Don



Pedro willing to offer him in return for one more opportunity of life and revenge.

This he explained to Men Rodriguez, who sought out the Breton secretly in his tent and laid before him the royal suggestion. Du Guesclin expressed neither approval nor disapproval, but sat for some time in silence brooding heavily. Then he spoke. . . .

“I must have time to consider your proposal and to consult the leaders of my Company.”

Abruptly he sent the other away, and Men Rodriguez, returning to Montiel secretly as he had come, warned his master to expect nothing from the interview; but to Don Pedro's satisfaction the bait he had proffered seemed eagerly swallowed. After a series of negotiations that promised him freedom and the Breton wide lands in Spain, he set out one evening from the Castle, congratulating himself on the greed of these foreign freebooters that passed him so easily through the midst of his brother's guards and sentries, and was led to the French camp. Haughtily he demanded to see Du Guesclin, and so came to that warrior's tent.

“Let us to horse, Messire Bertrand,” he cried, “it is full time we set out.”

No one answered him, but of a sudden the circle of curious faces that had formed around him parted, and Henry of Trastamara stood before him, the brother he had not seen for fifteen years.

“Where is that Jew who calls himself King of Castile?” exclaimed Henry, and Don Pedro, realising he was betrayed and trapped, answered with a foul taunt. The two sprang at one another's throats, and in a moment were locked in a death struggle. Back-

wards and forwards they swayed, until Pedro, who was the stronger, flung his brother across a camp bed in a corner of the tent and knelt on him, fumbling for his dagger.

This was not the end of the scene that had been intended.

Swiftly a knight, some accounts say an Aragonese, one Du Guesclin himself, ran forward and forced Don Pedro over on his side.

Thus, freed for a moment, Henry of Trastamara drew his poignard and raising his rival's coat, stabbed him again and again.

It was not a glorious exploit, this murder of a man betrayed, but those who hate the nature of the deed as a stain on Du Guesclin's chivalry cannot mourn his victim. He had lived foully, and as he had lived he died, cut down like some wild beast, a name of scorn for all time.

## CHAPTER X

### *ALVARO DE LUNA, A PRINCE OF COURT FAVOURITES*

THE career of John II, great-grandson of Henry of Trastamara, should be of special interest to English readers, for his mother, Queen Catherine, was an English princess, daughter of John, Duke of Gaunt. The boy sovereign himself also, with his ruddy cheeks, blue-green eyes, and ripe hazel hair, his precocious love of books and music, his instinct for culture and peace as opposed to the taste for bloodshed and anarchy that inspired his Court, is at first sight an attractive figure.

We look for a second "En Jacme," but instead we find only a sawdust doll, well-meaning but without backbone or initiative, so that were the long reign of John II merely concerned with its sovereign it would not be worth recording.

A king at barely two years old, whose government of Castile was undertaken first by his uncle, the Infante Don Fernando, and then, when that wise regent was called away to rule the neighbouring kingdom of Aragon, by his mother, Queen Catherine, John on her death became the docile puppet of a courtier of unusual strength and ability.

This young man, Alvaro de Luna, is the hero of our present story; not because like another climber, Almanzor, he achieved glory and conquest for Spain, since his thirty years' ascendancy left only a ripple on the sea of national life effaced in his passing, but solely on account of his personal magnificence.

From amongst Court favourites of all realms and times (that ineffectual and greedy tribe which seems a necessary trapping of absolute monarchy) he stands forth a prince, infusing the office he was incapable of using for national ends with so much Castilian dignity and grace in contrast to his blustering rivals, that we cannot but admire his resource and regret his final downfall.

The son of a noble and a woman of humble birth, "base-born," as his enemies so often taunted him, the young Alvaro de Luna faced life with little capital save his natural wits and a good education. Handsome he was not, for we learn from contemporaries that he was short, disfigured with smallpox, and almost bald ere middle age. On the other hand he was well-knit and lithe in his movements, a born dancer and rider, fluent, in speech, and perfectly at ease whether in a ballroom, out hunting, or tilting in the lists.

His personal tastes matched those of the young King to whom he was recommended as a page by his uncle, Pedro de Luna, Archbishop of Toledo, and very soon he had fascinated the musical, pleasure-seeking crowd that filled the royal ante-chamber by the plaintive "cancioneros," or love-songs, that he composed and sang to the lute. Above all, by music and wit he found a way to the impressionable heart of John II himself.

"On those days that Don Alvaro was absent from Court," we are told, "the King was not as happy as he was wont."

Quite early in their friendship the page became indispensable to his master, but few guessed that this influence would soon extend to the exclusion of all others; and many employed him as a ladder for their

own ambitions who afterwards cursed their folly in trusting his smooth-spoken readiness to comply with their wishes.

“He was a great dissimulator, secret and crafty, so delighting in wiles and cunning that they would seem to be his natural element.”

This is the verdict of a courtier whom De Luna once outwitted and carries the sting of wounded vanity: it is not, however, without truth.

The favourite who could reckon little on wealth or influence himself relied instead, in his struggle against rivals who flaunted their birth and riches with complacent arrogance, on a diplomacy that hid his real intentions. Had he done otherwise he would in all probability have disappeared in a night scuffle with hired assassins, for the King's cousins, John, King of Navarre, heir to the Aragonese throne, and Don Enrique, Master of Santiago, his brother, both of whom openly aspired to dominate the Castilian throne, were not the type of men to let a dangerous upstart stand in their way.

Instead, however, they were convinced that the nice-mannered page was a meek instrument placed ready to their hands by some kind fortune; and when, early one morning, Don Enrique himself, armed to the teeth and followed by a hand of baronial cut-throats, broke into the royal palace at Tordesillas and awoke King John from his slumbers, the invader hastily declared that his quarrel was not with Don Alvaro, whom he knew to be virtuous and loyal.

His whole desire, he explained, was to reform the Court and banish those officials who wished to ruin Castile. The young King, who had been staring at



him resentfully, for he hated violence, at once objected that many of the names on the proscribed list drawn up by his cousin were those of his personal friends. Nothing would induce him to banish them. It was Alvaro de Luna who at last calmed his anger and persuaded him to affix his signature to the various documents and letters in which Don Enrique announced to the realm the new order of government.

In private the page assured his master that such compliance was only for the moment. They would assuredly find some means of escape in the course of the next few months, and in the meantime, by way of preparation, they would send secret complaints of the tyranny under which they suffered to the King of Navarre, who was as jealous of his brother as of all other rivals, and would, therefore, come to their aid in his own interests.

Knowing nothing of these plans, and lulled in a sense of security by the admiration for his genius openly expressed by De Luna, the blustering Master of Santiago, grew ever less suspicious of his prisoners. Soon he even believed he had effected a complete reconciliation, for King John, prompted by his favourite, offered him his sister Catalina's hand in marriage, much to that lady's anger and disgust. Mediaeval diplomacy paid little heed to women's fancies, and Catalina was married against her will to Don Enrique; and while the bridegroom dallied with his bride and perforce relaxed his vigilance towards his brother-in-law, John, taking advantage of the opportunity, escaped from the town, on the pretext of hunting in the woods beyond the walls.

It was early in the morning when he and Don

Alvaro, with a train of faithful nobles and falconers, clattered through the streets, singing and laughing as if only pleasure was in their minds; but once out of sight the pace quickened and the laughter dropped.

Now the drama had become serious, with the hunters cast for the part of quarry, and many were the anxious glances thrown behind as they drew near the river Tagus and found it swollen by the heavy rains.

It was Don Alvaro who decided that there should be no turning back: so the one small boat that plied from shore to shore, filled to overflowing with fugitives, made its way slowly and with considerable difficulty to the opposite bank. Here was collected a party of horsemen that, having viewed with misgiving this arrival of armed strangers, rode down to intercept them and demand their object.

"Who are ye? What seek ye here? Answer us, speedily!"

"Come closer and I will do so," replied De Luna, mounting the steep bank, with the King and his followers treading at his heels.

Before the foremost man could remonstrate he had caught him by his bridle and was speaking in clear tones, whose smoothness did not hide his intention to proceed where he chose. . . .

"Friends, here is the King, and he and we that are of his company have need of the best horses you possess."

"The King!"

From all sides rose cries of incredulity. . . . Was not the King in Tordesillas celebrating his sister's marriage with the Aragonese Infante?

"I am the King," cried John II impatiently,

stepping from behind De Luna, and at the sight of him all hats were doffed and the horses surrendered without further argument.

The royal cavalcade rode swiftly on its way, but precious time had been lost in crossing the river and in the controversy upon the bank, so that by nightfall the fugitives could do no more than shelter in the Castle of Montalban already famous in history as a home of the beautiful Maria de Padilla.

The next morning, looking out from the battlements, De Luna saw to his dismay some of Don Enrique's troops already collected on the slopes below, watching the postern gate like a cat a mouse-hole.

"It is impossible to stand a siege: better to give in now than later when we shall have enraged his Highness beyond forgiveness!"

Thus argued not a few of the garrison, drawing attention to the quite inadequate store of water and food they had found in the castle, but the favourite to whom the fate of Montalban spelt the success or ruin of his whole career, inspired the young King with a determination to starve rather than surrender.

So the days passed, and the besieged were reduced to horseflesh relieved only by occasional gifts of cheese and partridges smuggled in by friendly peasants. The result was a gradual lengthening of sullen faces and open grumbling on the part of courtiers accustomed to the soft things of this life, but Alvaro de Luna did not heed them. More precious than smuggled food to him was the news that the Infante John of Aragon was already hurrying back from his kingdom of Navarre to punish his younger brother for his presumption, while all through Castile the rumour was spreading that Don

Enrique, Master of Santiago, far from being the patriot he pretended in public documents, was a tyrant who had dared to hold the King in thrall for his own ends.

Don Enrique himself heard the same tales uneasily. Propaganda has been brought to a fine art in modern times, but it was not wholly negligible in mediaeval days, and De Luna's secret messengers despatched from Tordesillas had done their work. Soon, he recognised, half Castile would be in arms as well as a jealous brother.

Ill-accustomed to discretion, he now decided sulkily that caution was the better part, and withdrew his army of cut-throats to harry the unoffending country round Toledo, while the garrison of Montalban, released from his menace, rode forth in triumph to greet the King of Navarre and proclaim the complete independence of John of Castile.

We have seen that with the young King's character such independence was impossible. The royal sapling would always need a prop of stouter fibre; and the Master of Santiago, having fallen from this estate, it was natural that Alvaro de Luna, newly created Constable of Castile, and dowered with revenues and lands confiscated from one of Don Enrique's principal followers, should undertake the burden.

At first the Court received the change with acclamations. Don Enrique, besides being brutal in his methods, had a rough and overbearing manner. Alvaro de Luna, in contrast, was both generous and affable in his dealings with those who thronged his ante-chambers.

According to his enthusiastic biographer, "he

wished all men to have a share of his wealth, realising that he had not been born for himself alone but for the whole world."

It is a picture so ideal that it may seem strange a Court, notoriously greedy for offices and lands, should ever weary of such a benefactor; but, as usual, there is another side to the canvas.

Despised in his youth, forced to beg favours and accept snubs in outward humility, the new Constable could not resist the opportunity of revenge that a change of fortune had brought him.

"For nearly thirty-two years," we are told, "he governed the kingdom, during twenty of which there was no grant made, temporal or spiritual, that did not pass through his hands."

It was this monopoly of patronage that galled beyond bearing the haughty Castilian nobles, accustomed to honours and emoluments as their birthright, while the gratitude of those who received benefits was tempered by the reflection that he who had given had but scattered drippings from a larger dish at which he feasted.

Never was a mere courtier raised so suddenly to a pinnacle of wealth and power. Offices, lands, and revenues were lavished daily upon him by his royal master, and the more he obtained the wider he seemed to spread his net.

"His patrimony," says a writer of the time, "spread like the plague," and with it spread the jealousy and fear that acted as a binding force amongst baronial desperadoes, whom no finer tie could have knit in fellowship. The result may be told in the words of De Luna's biographer. . . .



“ Many writers have recounted tales of Hercules the Theban . . . and have described how he slew a serpent called the Hydra that had six heads, and if one head was cut off six grew in the place of it. The like can certainly be said of the rebellions in the kingdom of Castile at this time, for as one rebellion was ended another arose in its place, and others following hard on that.”

“ You will never enjoy peace in Castile until, for a time at least, you have shown you can govern the kingdom without the aid of this man.” So whispered the King of Navarre in his royal cousin’s ear whenever opportunity offered, and because the dripping of water will wear down a stone, and John II was made of a far more malleable substance, he began at last to question his own conscience in the interests of his personal comfort. Would it be well for a time at least to banish De Luna?

From the depths of his shallow heart, King John hated the divisions that marred the harmony of his Court: he dreaded also the anger of his fierce cousins, and on this account had consented to be reconciled to Don Enrique: yet, on the other hand, he loved and admired his favourite, who never worried or irritated him with business, but quietly assumed the responsibility he himself so much dreaded.

At length he carried his troubles to his Father Confessor, a Franciscan, who, knowing the Court, quailed before giving a decision that must affront either the Aragonese Infantes or the all-powerful Constable.

In his dilemma the friar took refuge in a truly modern scheme, and suggested a committee of five impartial judges who should enquire into the govern-

ment of the kingdom in all its departments and issue a report accordingly. Let the King promise that he would accept their decree.

Relieved that he, at any rate, was not called upon to give a casting vote, John consented, and the farce began—a farce in truth, for nowhere in Castile could five men be found of sufficient standing and wealth to act as judges and yet give an impartial verdict, since each noble saw in the downfall of the present order a hope of satisfying his ambitions in a new.

When the committee decided, with great solemnity and parade of fair-dealing, that it would be best for Castile if the Constable retired to his private estates for eighteen months, the King of Navarre and his brother came joyfully to Court, while Alvaro de Luna, bowing before the storm, passed gracefully into exile.

It is not recorded that he smiled, but he might well have done so, for never was his power more clearly displayed than when with apparent carelessness he put it from him. Describing the failure of his rivals to make use of their opportunity, the favourite's biographer says: "With him they could not live . . . without him they knew not what to do."

The Court, in the Constable's absence, soon lost the gaiety his genius could alone evoke: the faction fights he had sternly repressed broke out with new bitterness: duels became the order of the day: assassinations marred the calm of night: the King, deprived of ease of mind and of De Luna's pleasant society, moped.

At length the citizens of Simancas, where the Court resided, grown weary of bloodshed, sought their royal master. Eighteen months of exile was, they pleaded, a

long sentence. . . . The Constable knew how to govern. . . . Could he not be allowed to return?

John II joyfully implied his readiness that he should return at once, and his cousins, the Infantes of Aragon, gave a sulky assent. They reflected that if they could make it appear the decree of banishment was rescinded only through their influence, the favourite might be willing in future to pay a little more attention to their wishes . . . . at any rate, they had taught him a lesson and he would hesitate to defy them. . . .

Unfortunately for such ideas, it was Alvaro de Luna who was teaching a lesson, and he had every intention of making it clear to the most thick-headed hidalgo.

The royal messenger who sought him in retirement found him lazily enjoying life, surrounded by a crowd of musicians, poets, and far-sighted courtiers, and attended like a prince by knights and pages from all the leading families in Castile.

"It seemed that the Court had rather left Simancas than the Constable the Court."

De Luna showed little enthusiasm or even interest in the subject of his return. His letter to the King, in answer to the royal summons, breathed humble contentment with his lot and the desire to prolong such a peaceful existence. In the last words he subtly revenged himself on those who had driven him into exile. . . .

"I feel sure that the King of Navarre, the Infante Don Enrique, and other great nobles of the Court will suffice to give you advice on all public matters that may require it."

This was bitter reading for those whose consent to his return had been an open acknowledgement of their



*Phot. by J. J. ...*

CORDOVA, INTERIOR OF THE MOSQUE.

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own incompetence, but more humility was still required of them. Not till he had been petitioned, nay, even commanded by the King three times, and his principal enemies had each taken a public oath that they believed his recall would be for the good of the kingdom, did he consent to withdraw his refusal. His return was like the home-coming of some national hero, crowned with the laurels of a military campaign.

Accompanied by all the nobles of his household, richly clad in embroidered suits, and attended by many other courtiers and prelates, the Constable rode proudly on his war-horse. Pages bore his cloak, his lance and sword: while in the van of the procession, bright with the sheen of velvet and silk and the gleam of cloth of gold and rich jewels, marched his archers and trumpeters in their grey and violet livery.

A mile out of town he was met by the King of Navarre and the Infante Don Enrique with every sign of goodwill and rejoicing; and so great was the crowd that pressed forward to kiss his hand that it was evening before he reached the palace. The King, impatient to welcome him, could scarcely wait to receive the customary homage before he threw his arms round his favourite's neck and embraced him.

Alvaro de Luna had triumphed indeed, but the victory was no signal for peace. He had insulted those who had injured him too deeply for them to forgive, even if he had shown himself conciliatory, but instead he displayed a haughty self-sufficiency against whose blaze their own arrogance showed dim.

Leagues and rebellions were soon a-smouldering: they took fire, were extinguished, and broke out again, hindering the growth of national life in Castile. The

Crusade against the Moorish kingdom of Granada which De Luna had planned, and on which he embarked with his usual energy, was forced to yield to the futilities of civil war.

At the Battle of Olmedo in May, 1445, however, the rebels were put to open rout; and the Infante Don Enrique, dying of a wound that De Luna's biographer considered a special dispensation of Providence, the Constable was at once created Master of the Military Order of Santiago.

Wealthier than the King himself, his chief enemies either dead or dispersed, the favourite of a sovereign who did not dare, we are told, to go to bed without his leave, Alvaro de Luna, adventurer and climber, stood on the topmost rung of the ladder his ambition had raised. He dominated the Court, and through the Court, Castile, yet ruin lay before him, and that the outcome of his own policy.

King John had been married in his youth to an Aragonese princess, and, on her death, inclined towards a French alliance. De Luna, on the other hand, sought at this time an ally within the peninsula, and easily persuaded his docile master to change the direction of his desire.

In 1447 King John married the young and beautiful Isabel of Portugal; and here trouble began, for the new Queen of Castile was not in the least grateful to the Minister who had gained her a crown. Instead she shrewdly calculated that he stood between her and any position of real authority. The favourite, she decided, must be overthrown; and day and night she urged this necessity on her royal husband as the price of her affection.

John, who long ago when the same question had been at issue had yielded to the importunity of cousins he disliked, was as wax in the hands of a wife with whom he had fallen in love. If Queen Isabel willed the death of the man who had been his adviser and friend for over thirty years there was no strength of loyalty in him to withstand her clamour.

"Don Alvaro Destuniga, my Serjeant-at Arms, I command you to seize the person of Don Alvaro de Luna, Master of Santiago, and if he resists to kill him."

This was the decisive message that gave the Queen's conspirators, concealed in the Castle of Burgos, a warrant for their plot. De Luna, unsuspecting of his master's treachery, was sleeping that night in a friend's house in the town. He had received a warning the evening before that there was a report in Burgos concerning his arrest, but utterly refused to believe it.

When urged to fly before the city gates were closed he replied contemptuously: "As God lives what is the need?" but he woke to the sound of men-at-arms clattering down the street, and cries of:

"Castile! Castile! Liberty for the King!"

Soon the house was surrounded, and soldiers armed with javelins answered the fire that De Luna's retinue of archers opened on them from the windows. Finally, however, the favourite consented to surrender, on the receipt of a signed letter from the King promising that "neither he nor his household, nor his belongings should be subject to damage or insult."

Of all the weak and cowardly acts of John II this was the most base, for mercy and protection were far from his thoughts. Without waiting for the trial he

rode away to seize his favourite's possessions, while those of the Royal Council summoned to act as judges unanimously voted a death sentence. Some difficulty was found in justifying this verdict in words, and the vague expression that "he had usurped the person of the King" ultimately covered the fallen minister's list of crimes. It conveyed a hint of the supernatural due to witchcraft that thoroughly satisfied mediaeval consciences.

"For forty-five years of my life, King Don Juan," wrote De Luna in his last letter to his master, "I have been in your service, nor have I heard you utter one word of complaint. The favours you have showered on me were greater than I deserved and more than I desired. One thing alone was lacking to my prosperity, caution."

On June 2nd, 1453, Alvaro de Luna met his death in Valladolid. Clothed in black and mounted on a mule with trappings of the same sombre hue, he rode on his last journey while before him went the public crier, calling aloud. . . .

"This is the justice that the King, our lord, commands to be done to this cruel tyrant and usurper of the kingly crown. . . ."

Drawn by the sound of the proclamation and the rumour of its cause, citizens hurried from every side street and alley in their eagerness to view the fallen favourite. In the central square was the scaffold, carpeted as if for some play or masquerade. Only a massive beam with its projecting iron hook and the block beneath spoke of the reality of the tragedy. Bending his knees before the crucifix, with its guttering torches one on either hand, De Luna turned

to the friar who had exhorted him to reconcile his soul to God and die a good Christian.

"I am so doing," he answered steadily. "My faith is like that of the Holy Martyrs."

However lowly the origin with which his enemies had taunted him, not the proudest could have surpassed his dignity in that hour of test.

Waiving aside the rope with which the executioner would have bound his hands, he drew a ribbon from his breast and bade the man use that instead. Then, looking upwards at the iron hook he demanded its reason, and was told that after he was beheaded his head should be placed thereon.

"After that I am beheaded," he answered coldly, "let them do with my body and head as they like," and kneeling down he received the headsman's kiss and entreaty of forgiveness.

Then the headsman "thrust the dagger through his neck and placed it on the hook. And the head remained there nine days and the body three days, and he placed a silver basin where lay the head of the Master when his throat was cut, that into it such as would give alms for his burial might cast it; and into that basin was cast much money."

John II did not long survive the friend and servant he had betrayed. De Luna's biographer maintains that his last days were heavy with self-reproach, and this may well have been true. However little of permanent value Spain and her people owe to the favourite, his master owed him much.



## CHAPTER XI

### *DON CARLOS, PRINCE OF VIANA*

THE centre of interest in this Spanish story is neither Castile nor Aragon, but the little mountain state of Navarre, lying across the Pyrenees, as someone has described it like "a pair of saddle-bags across a mule's back."

Here lived the Basques, who in the ninth century had defied both Charlemagne, the Conqueror of Europe, and Abd-Er-Rahmān I, Emir of Cordova. This attitude of independence is typical of the race, continually menaced by both French and Spanish ambitions but willing to yield to neither—a people apart, with their own kings and their own laws, glorying in war as a national career so that freed for a few months from foreign aggression they would break into faction fights amongst themselves.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Navarre was ruled by Charles the Noble, a king without other heir to his throne than his daughter Blanche, whom he had married in a moment of political blindness to that turbulent scoundrel, John of Aragon.

Very often must he and Doña Blanche have regretted this unwise match, for the Aragonese prince, with his red-rimmed suspicious eyes, his bitter tongue and evil outbursts of rage, was a difficult man with whom to live at peace. His royal cousin and namesake, and the Castilian favourite, Alvaro de Luna, had quickly

discovered as much, and so also did his unhappy wife when in 1425 her father died and she became in her own right Queen of Navarre.

Her husband at once assumed the title King of Navarre, and began to behave in public as though he had inherited the crown instead of being merely a prince-consort. Perhaps if Queen Blanche had been wise or strong-minded she would have chosen this moment to assert her independence, trusting in the loyalty of her subjects to uphold her will, but she was by nature timid and unambitious, always ready to follow the line of least resistance.

Her advice to her children, as well as to the Navarrese throughout her reign, might be summed up in the phrase: "It were better not to arouse the King's anger"; and to this effect she spoke on her deathbed, imploring her son, Don Carlos, Prince of Viana, not to press his own claims to Navarre so long as his father lived for fear of fomenting civil war.

Don Carlos was like his mother, gentle and peace loving, and readily agreed to her last wishes. If he did not fear King John to the same extent as had the unfortunate Queen Blanche, yet he so little shared that father's greedy love of power that he was quite willing to set aside for the time his obvious right to the throne, and appear only as lieutenant in charge of the kingdom. Deep in his heart he was interested neither in thrones nor politics, but in books, music, and painting; and as often as he could steal away from the uncongenial task of carrying on the government he would be found in his private room, absorbed in deciphering classical manuscripts or in fingering his lute.

Such tastes would have aroused sympathy in the Caliphate of Cordova, a faint understanding in modern Europe, but to John of Aragon, self-styled King of Navarre, a typical mediaeval baron, they seemed inspired by idiocy or craft. So forbearing a son must, in his opinion, be either fool or knave.

Possessed by a natural tendency to suspect others of the double-dealing he consistently practised, he inclined to the idea of knave; and thus the gentle, rather melancholy youth developed in his father's imagination into a dangerous rival to be watched and thwarted, however apparently harmless his behaviour.

Court gossip, when tapped by spies, readily lent colour to such a view, for it circulates in an atmosphere where there are always men and women hoping to rise on the débris of another's ruin; but above all there was a royal mischief-maker in King John's youngest daughter, Leonora, Countess of Foix, who, resembling her father in character, hated her brother and elder sister, Blanche, merely because they stood between her and the inheritance of Navarre on which her ambitious mind was set.

Alone, Leonora might not have been able to do more than gently fan her father's suspicions, but when in 1445 King John married again, she found a new and vigorous ally in her campaign of hate. This was her stepmother, Joanna Enriquez, a member of one of the old Castilian families that, connected with the House of Trastamara, deemed themselves every whit as royal, and boasted ambitions as proud and far-reaching as their lineage.

In this case the bride's desires were gratified not merely by her marriage with the titular King of

Navarre, but because her husband was also heir-apparent to the thrones of Aragon and Sicily, whose king his elder brother, Alfonso V, had no other legitimate successor. Yet, musing on this royal prospect, Joanna, like Leonora, saw always one obstacle in the glorious future she had planned—her step-son, Don Carlos of Viana, whose claims to Navarre she might have forgiven had he not been direct heir as well to his father's hopes in Aragon and Sicily.

The realisation was galling at the time of her marriage; it became intolerable some years later at the birth of her own son, Ferdinand, destined, she felt, merely because of the obstructive Don Carlos, to play a secondary part in the history of his country.

Everything that Leonora had said to her father in condemnation of his heir, Queen Joanna repeated and strengthened with her own complaints; and King John, who admired his second wife's haughty temper far more than he had ever loved Queen Blanche for her unselfish forbearance, listened, brooded and snarled his agreement with her sentiments.

The Prince was without doubt a traitor . . . . yes . . . . it was obvious he must be treacherous when it was so much to his advantage . . . . but the only way to meet conspiracy was to counter it with another plot. . . . The Prince must be reduced to a nonentity . . . . or banished . . . . or . . . .

At this stage in the discussion Queen Joanna unfolded her plan. Let the King send her to Navarre to act as joint-regent with her stepson in that country, ostensibly that she should protect her husband's

interests, in reality that she might bring the government to chaos by rallying into definite opposition to the Prince the Navarrese faction called the Agramonts with whom he was then at variance.

Educated by the Constable Don Juan de Beamonte, hereditary enemy of the Agramonts, the Prince Don Carlos, on coming of age, had accepted his tutor as his chief adviser and filled the offices of State with his relations and friends, a partiality that was to cost him dear. One day as he started forth on a hunting expedition, the Prince was stopped by the Marshal Don Pedro de Agramonte, chief of this turbulent clan.

"Señor," he exclaimed aloud that all those present might hear quite clearly, "let your Highness know that we acknowledge you for our king . . . as is meet we should and as we are bound to do, and none on this head should think otherwise; but if it should prove that the Constable and his brother are to rule over us, know, Señor, that it would be well for us to resist with the greatest integrity in our power. . . ."

To this audacious remonstrance the Prince of Viana had merely replied with his usual vagueness, saying that he did not believe the Constable intended any injury to his rivals, and that, therefore, Don Pedro should "think nought thereof." . . . He then rode away, leaving Don Pedro thinking much and very bitterly, according to that Court gossip in whose hints and rumours King John and his wife so much delighted.

Here were muddy waters, well worth the fishing by political anglers. So Queen Joanna was despatched to Navarre as she had suggested, and Don Carlos, if he did not feel enthusiasm at her coming, at any rate



welcomed her with his usual docility to his father's wishes.

Far otherwise was it with the indignant faction of Beamontes soon driven from office and their life made a burden by the Queen's spies.

"In pursuance of what right," they demanded, "doth King Juan send this foreign woman to reign over us and do such an injury to his son, who hath governed us these many years with such consummate prudence and ability?"

The muddy waters quickly thickened and became tempestuous. Faction quarrels broke into secret murders and plots, and these in their turn developed into acts of open rebellion against the hated "foreign woman."

Queen Joanna demanded the extermination of the Beamontes, who were, she declared, at the bottom of all the disturbance in the kingdom: her stepson, while upholding the innocence of his friends, attempted half-heartedly to enforce some of the lighter penalties that she had suggested. He was indeed entangled in a very cunning snare, and his fellow regent who had set the trap was well aware of it. Either he must place himself completely in her power by betraying his supporters to the faction she had made her agents by bribery and promises, or else he must stand before the world a confessed rebel against his father's commands.

The case was very clearly laid before Don Carlos by his old adviser, Don Juan de Beamonte, who sought him one night secretly and implored him to assert his independent right to the crown of Navarre.

"Señor," he said earnestly, "it is your life at stake as well as our fortunes;" and the Prince could not deny

that the sequel to placing himself in his stepmother's power would be almost certainly a dagger or a dose of poison.

Very reluctantly he yielded to the Constable's advice, withdrawing from Court and then issuing a public announcement of his just claims to rule Navarre without foreign control.

The kingdom at once flamed into civil war, willingly enough as ever in her history, but Don Carlos of Viana's followers soon became puzzled and depressed by their master's obvious lack of joy in the enterprise. It seemed from his manner as though he believed he were doing wrong in thus raising his banner of defiance, while Queen Joanna in contrast boldly asserted the righteousness of her cause and called on heaven to punish the base ingratitude of a well-loved son towards his father.

The truth was that Don Carlos, who hated action, and above all, action that involved strife, could not put from his mind the hope of compromise; and while he hesitated from day to day, hoping for an olive branch, the less enthusiastic of his followers melted away.

The force that remained, outnumbered by its enemies, was heavily defeated in the field, for no olive branch was extended, and not all the Prince's courage could make up to the Beamontes for his previous lack of leadership, and soon he and they were driven in headlong flight before the triumphant armies of Joanna. Hiding here and there amongst the mountains, disguised and almost penniless, Don Carlos at length reached the coast and set sail for the Court of Naples, in order that he might appeal to his uncle for sympathy and protection.

Alfonso V, King of Aragon and Sicily by inheritance and of Naples by right of conquest, was a very different type of man to the princes, John and Enrique, his brothers; for his ideals and breadth of mind set his imperial ambitions far above their petty schemings. True heir to the hopes of "En Jacme," the new "Conqueror's" gaze had swept the Mediterranean with a view to Aragonese expansion, the object of his desire, the mainland of Southern Italy herself, for which project the island of Sicily, acquired by one of his ancestors, lay at his feet and hers as a convenient stepping-stone.

Fortune favoured him with one of these opportunities with which she often tests the ambitious; for the childless old Queen, Joanna of Naples, momentarily captivated by his youth and energy, proclaimed him her heir. That, being of a fickle temperament, she proceeded during the last few years of her reign to name others as well for this high honour was to Alfonso beside the mark. The legal niceties of last wills and testaments did not trouble his conscience like that of his nephew, Charles of Viana. It was enough that he had once been called heir to the throne of Naples; and at Joanna's tardy death he pushed this claim with so much vigour and diplomacy that ere long he found himself established in "The Kingdom,"\* acknowledged as an Italian prince by all the leading powers of Europe.

Like "En Jacme," Alfonso V meditated on the prospects of a crusade as sequel to his victory; but the Papacy regarded him with suspicion, and without the Church's blessing he had too shrewd a business head

\* "The Kingdom" was the Italian name for the Kingdom of Naples.

to undertake so large a campaign. On the other hand he was wearied by the primitive quarrels of Castile and Aragon, so leaving his wife and brother, the Infante John, to manage his Spanish affairs he remained in Naples, lord of a Court that he soon made famous for its wit and learning.

Whether at home or in the field the Aragonese King of Naples was always attended by scholars and lovers of books, music and art, ready to wile away his leisure hours with reading and talk, and almost fabulous were the prices he was willing to pay for precious manuscripts brought from Greece or the Orient.

Don Carlos of Viana, escaping from the barbaric mountains of Navarre to this atmosphere of culture and peace, felt he had stepped into a paradise of which he had before only dreamed; and, welcomed by his uncle, who promised to intercede for him with his father, the prince spent at the Aragonese Court and in the Island of Sicily that he had made his home the happiest years of his life.

Like the hum of distant wasps came occasional reports from Navarre of conspiracies to disinherit him.

"Doña Leonora is now pursuing her schemes at a swinging rate," wrote one of his partisans, adding: "It is said, Señor, that your sister, the said Countess of Foix, is in danger of losing an eye. By my troth, Señor, let not this give you grief or uneasiness, for one who plotteth the ruin of such a brother, well deserveth to lose an eye, even though it were the right one."

Don Carlos bore little grudge at this time to Leonora or even to Joanna Enriquez, his stepmother. Within the walls of a Sicilian monastery he translated the works of Aristotle and confided with a sigh to the



abbot how gladly he would remain there for the rest of his lifetime, at peace with all the world and free from cares of government.

In the meantime his uncle endeavoured, as he had promised, to bring about an understanding between father and son. but the Prince, though his gratitude was touched, did not realise the practical necessity for such a step until in the year 1485 Alfonso fell ill and died with unexpected suddenness. Then Don Carlos knew at last that he had lost his only real friend, and for two days, we are told, he remained shut up in his lodging, overcome with grief and neither eating nor drinking.

By his will Alfonso left Aragon and Sicily to his brother John, his legal heir, Naples that he had won by war and diplomacy to his illegitimate son, Ferrante. To his favourite nephew, Don Carlos of Viana, he bequeathed a yearly income of several thousand ducats, the first instalment of which the new King of Naples scrupulously paid, making it clear, however, that his Court was not to be considered any longer a haunt for political refugees.

If Naples was no more a home, Sicily, the peaceful, had become a scene of strife, for the Sicilians, now that Alfonso was dead, clamoured for a ruler of their own, and tried to force the Spanish prince to accept this rôle in defiance of his father's rights. Greatness, it would seem, was always to be thrust upon him, but with both hands the unhappy Infante, thus mocked by fate, pushed the crown from him.

With relief he learned that King John was willing to consider a reconciliation; and indeed that monarch had been frightened into concealing his hatred for his son,



not only by hearing rumours of his popularity in Sicily, but also under pressure from Barcelona, the principal port in the Aragonese dominions.

This sea-city, always turbulent and independent, had been proud of her absent monarch, Alfonso V, she liked the little she knew of the easy-going Prince of Viana, "born to rule but not to govern;" while in contrast she hated the avaricious and meddlesome John II and his self-assertive wife.

Thus it was meat and drink to her pride to force King John to welcome back his son and heir by refusing her allegiance on other conditions, and when at last Don Carlos landed and rode through her streets, Barcelona gave him a welcome that could not have been exceeded for Pope or Emperor.

In this triumphal progress, past miles of houses hung with tapestries and rich silks, King John sourly took his part. At the harbour he had met his heir; and the latter, mastered by the emotion of home-coming and his uneasy conscience, that despite the arguments of Juan de Beaumont, had never quite justified his rebellion in his own eyes, had fallen on his knees, kissing the royal hand and imploring forgiveness in the words of the Prodigal Son.

With outward graciousness the old King raised his son, embraced him, and promised to overlook the disobedience of which he and Queen Joanna had been the main cause; but even as he spoke fresh suspicions aroused by the cheering crowds were gnawing at his heart, turning his boasted love and confidence into a living lie.

He had planned a Prince of Viana humbled and discredited: instead he found his heir the darling of

Barcelona, with all her men and money at his disposal. The possibilities this vision conjured up before his tortuous mind were not allowed to die when the King at last withdrew from the city he hated and feared to the society of his Queen at Lerida.

It was she who added to his fears of plots and rebellions a vivid picture of Don Carlos reducing the prospects of his brother, the little Infante Ferdinand, to ruin: it was she who supplied carefully-collected evidence of a supposed secret alliance between the King of Castile and the Prince of Viana aimed at the downfall of Aragon; and at each revelation and fresh titbit of Court gossip the King grew more morose and embittered.

At length, determined to put matters to the test, he summoned his elder son to Lerida to answer the charges of conspiracy made against him. A safe-conduct was proffered, but the chief citizens of Barcelona laughed the idea of its protective value to scorn and implored the Prince to remain with them.

"Señor," said his chief physician bluntly, "if you are taken you may consider yourself as dead . . . even though they should taste your food before you they would still find means to give you poison which should send you to your account."

Don Carlos of Viana, if too simple to foil the cruel diplomacy of his age, was no coward. He steadfastly refused to believe in his father's evil intentions, maintaining that he had been deceived and would recognise the honesty of his son as soon as that son appeared unarmed in answer to the royal command. With this hope in his heart he set forth on his journey; but,

arrived at the Aragonese Court, he found his friends had spoken the truth. Here was no welcome for a prince, no rejoicing in a character cleared, but watchfulness as towards an enemy, nay, even as towards a prisoner already condemned.

"Where, oh my father," he demanded, when at last admitted to the royal presence, "is the faith which you plighted me? . . . . Where the royal safeguard? Where the clemency? God is my witness I never undertook nor imagined aught against your person. Why would you seek to exact vengeance from your own flesh and blood?"

That it was just because Don Carlos was of the same flesh and blood and, therefore, a possible rival was King John's whole argument for his treacherous action; but he cloaked this indecent truth beneath a profession of indignation at his son's supposed perfidy, and with a great parade of righteous anger ordered him back to prison.

By this time, however, the news of the Prince's reception at Lerida had spread to Catalonia, and Barcelona flew to arms, imperiously calling for her darling's instant release. So insistent was she, and so increasingly numerous the armed Aragonese, who hastened to enrol themselves under her banner, that King John felt he had shown his hand too hastily, and, terrified at the fear of dethronement, revoked his order. He pretended that it was his wife's generous entreaties that had led him to show this mercy.

"Señores, my true and good friends," wrote Don Carlos from his prison to the chief Catalonians, "this day at three of the afternoon arrived the Señora, the

Queen, who hath given me full liberty, and we are both about to set out for your city where we will personally render you the thanks that are your due."

Barcelona rejoiced at this information but firmly declined to receive the Queen within her walls. If the Prince was forgiving to the point of weakness, his loyal citizens at any rate could be firm on his behalf: so at Morella they stayed Queen Joanna's progress with a company of armed men. Her stepson, amid cheering crowds, proceeded on his way alone, and from every side as he entered this, the proudest city of Aragon, arose the cry:

"Carlos! Carlos! Heir-Apparent of Aragon and Sicily . . . . May God protect thee!"

Yet the last word was with Queen Joanna, or, so the rumours and hints of history maintain; for some five or six months later Don Carlos, who had been ailing of a fever and weakness ever since his return from Lerida, became seriously ill and died. A few days afterwards died, also of the same symptoms, the butler who had waited on him in prison; and few of the men and women of Barcelona doubted that slow poison was the original cause of both these deaths, or that it had been administered by the orders of that "foreign woman," the Castilian Joanna Enriquez.

There is no place to tell here of the miracles that many maintained were wrought at the dead Prince's tomb, nor of the passion of indignation and hatred that for the sake of their idol's memory kept Barcelona in rebellion against her King for ten long years. Don Carlos of Viana, in life too gentle and unassuming to play the leading part for which he was cast, shone for



a short time triumphant in death: but the burden of his suffering passed to his sister, Doña Blanche, now by right of succession heiress of Navarre and consequently the object of her father and younger sister's envious hate.

This princess, for some years Queen of Castile, but repudiated by her dissolute young husband, Henry IV, had lived since her return home a virtual prisoner in King John's power. All the love denied her by her father and sister she had lavished on her exiled brother, persistently upholding his cause at hostile family councils, and thus, as it proved, sealing her own death-warrant, when fate or Queen Joanna's poison-cup had swept Don Carlos free from this world's struggles.

At first there was talk of a convent for Blanche and surrendered rights to Navarre; but Leonora's revengeful spirit rejected this compromise. Let her sister die—death only was safe. With his usual aptitude for lying, King John elaborated a fantastic tale of a marriage he had arranged for his elder daughter with the King of France's brother. All that was required was for Blanche to ride across the mountains with him to the French Court.

"Take me by force if you will . . . I will not come of myself."

So Blanche sent passionate answer, well aware that death was her destined bridegroom, and her grave the mountains of Navarre under Agramont rule her sister's stronghold.

At this firm answer diplomacy was dropped, and by force, as she had bidden them take her, the heiress of Navarre was borne first to the Convent of



Roncesvalles and thence to the Castle of Ortez in the province of Bearn. What happened there is conjecture; but that Blanche of Navarre never emerged alive from its grim walls is a matter of history, as well as the fact that Leonora, acting as lieutenant in the kingdom for her father during his lifetime, only enjoyed for some three weeks the full and complete sovereignty for which she had committed so many crimes.

## CHAPTER XII

### *BOABDIL "THE UNLUCKY"*

THE Prince of Viana's death, while a personal tragedy, proved for Aragon, and still more for Spain, the open doorway to a new era of national greatness, since Charles' half-brother Ferdinand, for whom Queen Joanna had so successfully schemed and lied, was now John II's heir, and Ferdinand, having achieved a spirited runaway match with his cousin, Isabel, heiress of Castile, became some years later joint ruler with his wife of the two chief kingdoms in the peninsula.

This union might almost be called the most important event in Spanish history. One of its immediate results was that the two young sovereigns, who were energetic and full of fine theories of government, set to work to cleanse their lands of disorder. No longer would they tolerate subjects so wealthy or powerful as Alvaro de Luna, as dangerously quarrelsome as the Infantes his enemies. No more should the rich oppress the poor unpunished, or robbers lie in wait on the high-roads as a matter of daily business to intercept the hardworking and carry off their gains.

A bishop, recalling in a sermon the unhappy times so lately passed when there was no king in Castile worthy of the name, declared: "He was most esteemed among us who was strongest in violence . . . our swords were employed not to defend the boundaries of Christendom but to rip up the entrails of our country."

In contrast we read a contemporary description of life under the "Catholic Sovereigns," as Isabel and Ferdinand were called by their subjects on account of their hatred for infidels and heretics.

"The citizens and artizans and all the poor people desirous of peace were very joyful because . . . . through the justice that the King and Queen began to execute each man thought to possess his own without fear that another would take it from him by force."

This sense of security at home was the first step towards gaining military glory abroad; for amid the baronial quarrels and violence that had disgraced the land since the days of Pedro the Cruel, the old crusading ideal had almost died away. Now it was revived, and by the final triumph of the Cross over the Crescent in Western Europe the names of Ferdinand and Isabel were made famous beyond those of all other Spanish rulers.

The Kingdom of Granada, last remnant in the fifteenth century of the once proud Caliphate of Cordova, extended for not quite two hundred miles along the southern shores of Spain. Within this narrow limit was represented every type of climate and vegetation. Here were snow-clad "sierras," or mountains, sheltering valleys rich in pasture, while away below, bathed in the blue of Mediterranean sunshine and protected from northern winds, lay wide fertile plains, irrigated and manured to the highest stage of cultivation by Moorish ingenuity and science. On all sides stretched cornfields, vineyards, orange-orchards, olive-groves and plantations of sugar-canes and mulberry trees, the latter destined to feed battalions of silk-worms for the benefit of the looms and markets of Granada and her large seaports.

There was at this time no more prosperous kingdom in Europe than the western outpost of Islam, bulwarked against its northern enemies by rugged mountains and safe, as it would seem through its rich crops and fruits, from any danger of blockade by sea or land.

So at any rate thought the Sultan Muley Hacen, looking out from the battlements of his palace of the Alhambra across the city of Granada to the wide "vega," or plain, beyond; and when in the year 1476 Christian envoys came to demand from him the tribute-money his predecessors had been willing to pay in order to avoid war, the new Sultan laughed in derision.

"Go, tell your sovereigns," he said scornfully, "that the Kings of Granada who were wont to pay tribute are dead. In my kingdom there is no coin minted save scimitars and iron-tipped lances."

When Ferdinand and Isabel received this message their hearts burned like fire at its insolence. Gladly would they have ridden forth on the instant at the head of a large army to accept the implied challenge, but they had not at this time reduced their own land to submission, and so they dissembled their anger. Chafing at the indignity, they consented to sign a temporary peace with the Moors that made no mention of tribute-money or allegiance; and Muley Hacen reading this document in his palace of the Alhambra smiled complacently; for he lacked the Christian sovereigns' far sight and deemed their caution cowardice.

By the year 1481 his turbulent and uneasy spirit could stand inaction no longer. Through his spies he had

learned that the gossip of the Moorish markets condemned him as a "tyrant" or "dotard," while secret hopes were expressed of his early death and the accession of his son and heir, Mahomet Abdulla, a vigorous and handsome youth, familiarly called "Boabdil."

Now Muley Hacen had never loved this prince, since at the time of the boy's birth astrologers had prophesied the downfall of the kingdom would be accomplished during his reign. It was only because of his affection for Aixa, Boabdil's mother, he had allowed the lad to be considered as his heir, but with the passing of years he had ceased to care for Aixa and fallen instead under the domination of a beautiful Christian slave, "La Zoroya," "The Light of the Dawn."

At her instigation he imprisoned Aixa and her children in the Tower of Comares, one of the fortified outposts of the Alhambra, determining when the opportunity offered to make an end of them as he had of many of his powerful subjects.

"By the sword of the executioner," he said grimly, "I will prove this prophesy of the stars false and put an end to all Boabdil's ambition," but because of his unpopularity he thought it best to postpone the actual deed, and in the meantime racked his brains for some project of military daring that might win the applause of his people.

It was but a few nights after the Christmas festival, a wild evening when the wind drove the snow, half-frozen as it fell, in gusts along the frontier passes of Granada, and hurled it in blinding missiles against the walls of mountain fortresses, that a body of light-



armed Moorish horsemen approached unseen the Christian stronghold of Zahara.

Muley Hacen had chosen his time well, for so great was the violence of the storm that the few sentinels placed on guard had taken shelter, and the majority of the inhabitants sought their beds behind closed shutters. Thus it was that the attackers, placing their scaling-ladders against the walls, were able to climb the battlements without other opposition than the wind and from there drop softly into the town below.

“The Moor! The Moor!”

This cry, at first one of surprise and rage, deepened into agony and terror, as half-clothed, with weapons hastily snatched up and armour ill-adjusted, the Christian garrison found itself cut down or overpowered, its women and children numbered and tied together that their triumphant conquerors might drive them before them like cattle to the market-places of their big cities.

A few days later, Muley Hacen, seated on his throne, accepted with arrogant satisfaction the congratulations of his Court, as the weary, stumbling, mob of prisoners passed through the gates of his capital to their destined harem or dungeon. In imagination he pictured himself a second Almanzor, marching on Compostella; but this glorious vision was destined, even as it was formed, to collapse like a pricked bubble.

Through the streets, hard on the heels of Christian captives, strode a Moslem “Santon,” or “holy man,” his eyes wild, his voice harsh above the merriment of the populace that it temporarily hushed in fear. . . .

“Woe! Woe to Granada! Its hour of desolation approaches. . . . The ruins of Zahara will fall



*Fhoto. by J. Laurent*

BOABDIL.

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upon our heads. . . . The end of our empire is at hand."

Fain would the Sultan have torn out the tongue of this prophet of evil, but he dared not touch him since the Moors believed him a saint; and so he sat in his palace gnawing his fingers and listening to that far-off cry . . . .

"Woe! Woe to Granada! Zahara is but a type of Granada!"

As long as the echo lasted he could not but wonder if the courtiers who bowed before him in flattery were asking themselves in silence afterwards:

"Doth that Santon indeed speak truth?"

An answer of a kind came shortly, for the game of surprise is one at which two can play, if only for a time, and the Christian revenge for the fall of Zahara was the seizure of the well-provisioned town of Alhama, lying in the plain only eight leagues distant from the Moorish capital. Here was defiance, as insolent as his own, and Muley Hacen, questioning the messenger, hastily gathered together a few of his picked troops and set out to punish the invaders.

The crowds who, hearing of the disaster, had superstitiously believed the Santon's prophecy on the eve of fulfilment, and wailed in the streets: "Ay! de mi, Alhama,"—"Woe is me, Alhama!"—now at the sight of clattering horsemen and embroidered banners, quickly changed their mood. Cheering, they followed Muley Hacen to the gates. Impatiently they waited news of his victory and the long lines of prisoners and captured baggage that they hoped to reap as their share of his spoils.

For days these expectations lasted, then, like a bitter

wind after sunshine, came whispers of disaster. Many of those Moorish warriors who had ridden forth so gallantly lay, it was said, beneath the walls of Alhama, hurled from its battlements by Christian spears. The rest, less fortunate, and led by Muley Hacen himself, had fled back across the plain in ignominious retreat.

To the mob, when certainty confirmed these reports, it mattered little that their Sultan, suddenly confronted with the approach of a Christian relief-force in overwhelming numbers, had saved his small army from annihilation in the only way that he could. Tactics and strategy mean nothing to men and women who are carried away by such simple and often misleading catchwords as "Glory" and "Disgrace."

Granada, they determined in an instant's emotion of anger, had been betrayed by an old dotard, fit for a divan rather than a saddle; and in silence or with muttered imprecations they watched his return, while that night through market and street sped the magic cry of "Boabdil! Boabdil! Our young Sultan!"

Boabdil, as it happened, was no longer in the Tower of Comares, since Muley Hacen, delaying to strike his executioner's blow, had missed his opportunity, and Aixa and her family been enabled to escape by means of scarves knotted into a rope and partisans standing below the window with horses. In Guadix, a town not far from Granada, they remained hidden until, as a result of the old Sultan's failure, they were invited to return to the capital and by their presence awake conspiracy into open rebellion.

Soon the narrow streets of Granada ran red with blood, not spilt in any crusading struggle of faith



against faith or of one civilisation against another, but in the still more deadly feud of father against son and Moor against Moor. From palace to palace the duel raged, until at length the popularity of youth and an unstained reputation triumphed, and the old man, hated for his violent temper and many savage deeds, was forced to withdraw with his brother, "El Zagal," "the Valiant," and a few faithful courtiers and citizens to the seaport of Malaga.

A true Mahometan, he read in his downfall the hand of fate. . . .

"God is great. . . . It was predestined that my son should sit upon the throne. . . . Let Allah only forbid that the rest of the prophecy be fulfilled."

In the meantime, throned in the Alhambra and lord of half his father's kingdom, the new Sultan, "El Rey Chico," or "the little King," as the Castilians contemptuously nicknamed him, determined to lift for ever the curse that had lain on his name since babyhood.

Did men say he should indeed lose the Moors their kingdom? He would show them such tales were but old wives' gossip.

Feeling that the most satisfactory proof of his worth would be to obtain a signal victory over his Christian foes, he began to plan a campaign that would cause him to be hailed as the saviour of his religion and race in Spain. When he confided this project to his wife and mother, the former wept, but Aixa reproved her sternly. . . .

"There lurks more danger for a monarch within the strong walls of a palace than within the frail curtains of a tent. It is by perils in the field that thy husband must purchase security on his throne."

Ali Atar, Boabdil's father-in-law and the commander of the important fortress of Loxa, fully agreed with this fiery counsel. Indeed he had suggested to the young Sultan that he should begin his martial career by joining in an attack on the Christian city of Lucena, before whose gates the old warrior himself had often ridden, foraging the wide plains for cattle, grain, oil and wine.

Nothing loath, Boabdil accepted the proposal, and with an army of nine thousand foot and seven hundred horse, rode forth from Granada, clad in shining armour, his unfleshed lance in hand. The crowd cheered him as they had cheered Muley Hacen going to the relief of Alhama; but some noticed that he shivered his lance passing beneath an archway, and others that, as he emerged from the city, a fox ran through the ranks close by the royal steed and escaped from all the darts and arrows aimed in its direction. These were considered ill omens by the superstitious, but the young Sultan laughed them away as he had the astrologer's prophecies.

All through the night after quitting Loxa, with Ali Atar on his right hand, he and his army marched swiftly down the wooded hills into the wide plains below, hoping to cross it unperceived in the darkness; but the day of surprises had passed and the enemy was on the alert. Long ere dawn the mountains round were illuminated by warning beacons, and the alarm bells of every frontier fortress rang out the appeal of the Cross for reinforcements against the Crescent.

"The country will soon be in arms. We must strike boldly for Lucena," said the old man uneasily, still eager for battle but scenting difficulties greater than he had feared.

Drawn up at dawn before the walls, the Moors bade Loxa's garrison surrender on the threat of putting the city to the sword; then, meeting a stern refusal, began their attack. In vain, however, Ali Atar and his picked veterans stormed the gateways, and the pride of Granada's manhood hurled itself against the battlements in wave after wave of fanatical ardour. The Christians, aware that every moment of endurance brought the hope of relief nearer, merely scanned the distant mountains and doggedly held their posts.

At length the old chieftain, glancing round him at the dead and wounded lying in heaps, counselled retreat, the words bitter in his mouth; but he was a tried campaigner and knew when risk ceased to be magnificent. Collecting the cattle and other spoils they had garnered on the plain before the city, he and Boabdil therefore turned their horses' heads in the direction of the frontier. They thought their expedition over less gloriously than they had hoped though still with profit, but as they reached the wooded hill country that bordered the "vega," the sound of cavalry descending the slopes before them became audible, and a banner shone for a moment here and there between the trees.

Now Ali Atar had warred with the Christians since he could hold a sword and knew all the emblems they ordinarily carried, so that at a glance he could say "So-and-So approaches" or "Here are the citizens of such-and-such a town!" On this occasion he could not tell that the gallant Count of Cabra, having mislaid the banner under which his family had warred for eighty years or more, had hastily, on seeing the beacons of Lucena, snatched up a standard with an old

device, that of a goat, and hastened forth with some two hundred and fifty knights to try his fortunes if need be against the entire Moorish army.

Much troubled at the strange banner, the old Moor shook his head. . . .

"Methinks it is a dog," he said at last, "and a dog is the device of the cities of Baeza and Ubeda. If it be so, Sire, all Andalusia is in arms against us, and we would do well to hasten our retreat."

Disheartened, Boabdil and his men prepared to defend themselves against innumerable odds, but hardly had they met the Count of Cabra's reckless onslaught that they believed the vanguard of the hosts of Andalusia, than a Christian trumpet sounded in their rear. This was another small force of Castilian volunteers, like the Count of Cabra's company, but the thickly wooded country concealed their identity and numbers.

"An Italian trumpet by the sound," said Ali Atar, grimly drawing his scimitar . . . . "All the world would seem to be in arms against us."

Bravely he and Boabdil turned to meet the new foe, but the fear of being cut off from their homes that the first order to retreat had bred in the hearts of the Moorish army now turned to panic; and suddenly, like a stream let loose from a dam, the Moslem lines broke in headlong flight. At a river, swollen by a recent flood, the young Sultan who had followed expostulating and upbraiding, managed to rally a few veterans, and with these he made a stand by the ford in order to help the crossing of his baggage. . . . Of his father-in-law he could see no trace. Bravely he fought but ever the number of his bodyguard decreased and the Christian attack grew fiercer and more determined.



Sick at heart, when it was already too late for personal safety, he consented to retreat himself and sheltered amid the willow thickets that bordered the stream, but the glint of his armour soon betrayed his hiding-place. A foot-soldier rushed to thrust him through with a pike, but Boabdil cut him down with his scimitar, and unwillingly surrendered to a Cordovan knight. No one at first knew his rank, but when it was rumoured that he was the young Sultan "El Chico," and that Ali Atar, the terror of the countryside, was dead, swept away in the flooded river, then there was merriment and rejoicing indeed at Lucena and in the Christian camp.

Alone in his prison-room in the Castle of Vaena, Boabdil looked out with sad eyes, dark and lustrous as we see them in his portrait, towards the plains he had traversed so triumphantly a few days before. He knew that Granada in all probability mourned him as dead, a prince fallen in battle and, therefore, worthy of his lineage. What would she say when she learned he was only a prisoner, the chattel of an unscrupulous enemy?

He was soon to know. Granada, like some beautiful but fickle woman, worshipped success. For failure she had merely contempt, and the same mob that had denounced Muley Hacén at the fall of Alhama and cheered his son as he rode forth to battle, now, in the revulsion, welcomed back the old Sultan to his vacant throne in the Alhambra.

A few of the poorer citizens, more pitiful than the rest, recalled in the gossip of the market the royal prisoner's horoscope, referring to him henceforth as "El Zogoybi," "the Unfortunate," the nickname astrologers had given him at birth. Well would it



have been for his reputation had Ferdinand and Isabel by keeping him imprisoned allowed him to earn no more shameful title; but the Christian sovereigns were astute enough to realise that "El Chico's" release would be a subtler move on the political chessboard than his suppression.

With every show of generous friendship, glossing the terms of patronage in return for service that they were prepared to offer, they therefore summoned him to their Court and graciously bade him go free and follow his ambitions.

Humbled and touched, the young Sultan knelt to kiss Ferdinand's hand, while one of his principal followers broke into a speech of gratitude and lavish promises.

"Enough!" exclaimed the Christian monarch, raising his prisoner and taking him by the arm, "there is no need for these compliments. I trust in his honesty, and that he will do everything becoming a good man and a good king."

Confident in the hopes of a Christian alliance that would restore peace to Granada, if only he could rid himself of Muley Hacen's rivalry, Boabdil set out for his capital with a comparatively light heart. He was to learn that it is easier for kings to lose ground than to win it. The "Albaycin," or poorer quarter of the city, had not forgotten him, but there alone the indomitable Aixa had been able to maintain the ascendancy of his name. The Alhambra was lost, and with it all the principal palaces and those time-serving courtiers who are ever ready to bow their knee before the moment's sun.

"Win back the Alhambra and Granada is thine,"

counselled Aixa; and the young Sultan, endeavouring to follow this advice, began again with renewed bitterness the civil war on which Ferdinand and Isabel, in setting him free, had cleverly reckoned as their best ally. Houses were turned into fortresses, roofs into outposts, and beneath in the narrow streets the populace languished and died.

"A king must think of his sceptre and his throne," said Aixa ruthlessly as she saw her son grow sick at heart and weary of this continual shambles, "He must not yield to softness like common men."

"El Zogoybi" was incapable of either her spirit or her hardness. Despite her expostulations, he entered into negotiations with his father, and finally consented to a peace that left Muley Hacen in possession of Granada while he himself withdrew to rule the seaport of Almeria and the surrounding districts. Here he lived, lord of a diminished Court, truly "El Rey Chico," despised by Moors and Christians, while his uncle, "El Zagal," reigned in the Alhambra for Muley Hacen, who had fallen ill and now but lingered in life an old man, feeble in mind and almost blind.

"El Zagal's" days were spent in planning his own succession. The first step, he decided, must be to rid himself of his nephew, and since he was utterly unscrupulous as to means, he intrigued with the garrison of Almeria, until he had induced the officers to sell their master into his hand. One day, when his plot seemed as near perfection as he could hope, he rode to Almeria, at the head of a heavily-armed band of cut-throats, and demanded admittance. Traitors, as he had arranged, threw wide the gates; and Boabdil, warned by a faithful groom, had barely time to escape

on horseback down a side street before his uncle, sword in hand, was traversing the palace corridors.

"Where is the traitor? Where is Boabdil?" he demanded, striding through the royal apartments, and came at last on Aixa and her younger son alone, save for one faithful attendant who had refused to leave them.

"I know no traitor false as thyself," she answered dauntlessly. "Allah grant that he be in safety, and live to revenge himself upon thy treachery."

"El Zagal," who was furious at this defiance and the way in which his purpose had been frustrated, with his own hand cut down the boy prince and his attendant, and gave orders that the Sultana should be loaded with chains and carried away a prisoner. Fired by his example those he had brought with him massacred the palace servants.

The news was brought to Boabdil, when he had safely crossed the mountains and stood a fugitive on Christian soil, without money or a Court, dependent on the charity of his overlords.

"Evil indeed," he exclaimed, "was the day of my birth. Truly have I been named 'The Unlucky.'"

With head sunk on his breast he turned his horse in the direction of Cordova.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *THE FALL OF GRANADA*

REPEATED failure often spells oblivion as far as history is concerned; and Boabdil, following his unlucky star, would seem by his ignominious flight from Almeria to have put himself beyond the horizon of history—a fallen sun whose claim to be the centre of the Moorish orbit had been proved a childish fallacy. So at any rate the Castilian sovereigns thought as they received their unsatisfactory vassal at Cordova with studied coldness; but in 1485 Muley Hacen died, and with this event the whole atmosphere surrounding the royal exile changed.

“El Zagal,” who had already proclaimed himself Sultan, at once seized greedily upon his brother’s private possessions, imprisoning Aixa’s rival, “La Zoroya,” and her sons in the Tower of Comares lest they should prove obstacles to his ambition. At the moment, had he realised it, his own indecent haste and harshness were his worst enemies. Many a king has lost his throne through gossip; and in the market-places of Granada there were woven tales of how Muley Hacen’s corpse, instead of receiving the State funeral befitting a Sultan, had been flung across a mule and hurried to a grave in secrecy by Christian slaves. Abdallah “El Zagal” was not present: he was too busy rifling the coffers of the dead: and those who listened to such whispered confidences shrugged their shoulders and nodded significantly. The sin of a brother’s neglect and

gratitude was soon transformed into accusations of fratricide.

There is no proof that the new Sultan of the Alhambra was guilty of this crime: Muley Hacen was old and feeble enough to end his days unassisted; but his successor's harsh nature and treacherous plots against his nephew lent colour to the idea. In the poorer quarters of Granada he was already disliked for his tyranny, and so through the Albaycin ran once more the whispering lament : . . .

“Where is Boabdil? Where is our true sovereign?”

Warned by spies of the possible trend of Moorish opinion in favour of their guest, Ferdinand and Isabel changed their mood also: their coldness and suspicion vanished, and they bestowed on the young Sultan not only dazzling smiles and friendly words but actual gifts of money and the loan of a troop of Christian adventurers, bidding him start forth with these and once more achieve a kingdom.

Weary of inaction and of the humiliating state of dependency in which he had been living, Boabdil joyfully left Cordova for the Moorish frontier, and there summoned to his standard all who believed him to be Muley Hacen's heir. Civil war it seemed must once more devastate the Kingdom of Granada, but there were those within the capital wise enough to face the prospect with dismay.

“Beware, O Moslems! of men eager to govern but unable to protect. . . . Why slaughter each other for “El Chico” or “El Zagal”? Let your kings renounce their contests and unite for the salvation of Granada or be deposed.”

So spoke the old Santon who had prophesied the fall



of the city at the time of the capture of Zahara; and the Moorish nobles who listened to his words with veneration murmured their purport in the ears of "El Zagal" in the Alhambra, while they sent ambassadors to "El Chico," and of each they demanded that they should sheath their swords and accept a division of the kingdom that would secure their sovereign rights in the eyes of the people and sufficient revenue to maintain two separate Courts.

The settlement finally arranged left "El Zagal" in possession of the capital and southern sea-board, while to his nephew fell the north-eastern portion of the land, for it was argued that Boabdil, as an ally of the Christian Kings, would thus act as a bulwark, screening the more independent Moslems in his rear.

A few at the Council Board, however, shook their heads and declared this sanguine expectation a castle built on sand.

"Trust not the hollow-hearted friendship of the Castilian King," exclaimed a far-sighted Moor to "El Chico," "he is mining the earth beneath thy feet. Choose one of two things: be a sovereign or a slave! Thou canst not be both."

Boabdil "the Unlucky" was incapable of acting on this advice. Personally brave, a lover of his faith and country, he was one of those men who almost necessarily fail because they do not seek their ambitions with whole-hearted perseverance like an "En Jacme" or an "Almanzor." First he would follow one road towards his goal, then lose heart and seek another until he heard of a third that might possibly prove better, and so exhausted time and money tracing and retracing his steps.

On this occasion "El Rey Chico" wrote to his friend and overlord the King of Castile to announce his improved fortunes and express his belief that the division of the land to which he had consented would meet with his warm approval. Above all he besought Ferdinand to desist from his preparations for besieging Loxa, a project on which the Christians were about to embark, since this important town, formerly the property of "El Zagal," had now by the terms of the Moslem treaty become his own headquarters.

Ferdinand, who had no interest in Boabdil save as a fomenter of civil war amongst his enemies, replied at once with a haughty refusal. Far from appearing pleased with his vassal's success, he denounced him as a traitor for daring to come to any agreement with Castile's arch-enemy, and hinted that in consequence he could no longer show him an ally's indulgence.

Boabdil, when he received this letter, was overwhelmed with mortification, and at once called for his armour and lance.

"Allah!" he cried aloud, "Thou knowest my heart and that I have been true in my faith to this Christian monarch. I have offered to hold Loxa as his vassal but he has preferred to approach it as an enemy. On his head be the infraction of our treaty."

Rashly impetuous where he had before hesitated, he now sallied out of the town with as many men as he could collect and fought so furiously in skirmishes with the Christian outposts that he was twice wounded and finally carried back into the city half-unconscious before any serious encounter had taken place.

The sight of their wounded sovereign did not encourage the besieged. Moreover, to their horror

they suddenly discovered that a small troop of daring Castilians had managed to climb the precipitous height of Santo Albohacin that commanded the town, and all efforts to dislodge them failed. During the ensuing struggle Ferdinand and the main army of Castilians appeared in sight, and with the aid of these reinforcements drove back the Moors into the city and captured the suburbs.

The hero of this fierce hand-to-hand-combat was, we are told by a Spanish chronicler, an Englishman, Lord Scales, who, battle-axe in hand, flung himself into the *mêlée* like a foot-soldier, followed by several score of archers and men-at-arms of his own race.

"Come, my merry fellows," he called to them, "we fight in a foreign land for the glory of God and the honour of our country. Behold, the eyes of strangers are upon us . . . . Forward all of ye! . . . . and St. George for England!"

This slogan, already famous on many a European battlefield, acted like a spur to bold crusading hearts, and when the knight was at last laid low by a heavy stone cast from the battlements above that drove in two of his front teeth, he and his "merry fellows" had strewn the ground with such numberless infidel corpses that they won the admiration of all the other Christians who saw their deeds.

The suburbs taken, the reduction of Loxa itself was merely a question of time and artillery; and in May, 1486, Boabdil, sullenly acknowledging his defeat, agreed to surrender. By the terms of capitulation he promised to renounce all claim to be King of Granada and to retire to the town of Guadix with the title of Duke, as soon as Ferdinand had captured that city.

He also expressed his readiness to carry on unceasing war against his uncle, Abdallah "El Zagal."

This last clause of the terms of surrender has stamped "El Chico" in the eyes of posterity as a double traitor to his faith and country; but, in condemning him, all that he had suffered at "El Zagal's" hands should be remembered—the death of his younger brother, the imprisonment of his mother, the nearly successful attempt on his own life at Almeria. Nowhere amongst his own kith and kin, even if he had renounced the Christian alliance altogether, could he have counted at this moment on sympathy and support. The very ambassadors sent to him by his uncle, not long after his retreat from Loxa, were, he discovered just in time to guard himself against their plots, provided with poisoned herbs to administer in his food, or failing that, had promised to stab him as they talked of peace and compromise.

While he meditated bitterly on the treachery and misfortune that seemed to lurk everywhere about his path, Boabdil received a secret message from Aixa.

"For shame!" it ran. "Will you linger on the borders of your kingdom when a usurper is seated in your capital? The Albaycin is ready to throw open its gates to receive you. Strike home vigorously! A sudden blow may end all or make an end. A throne or a grave for a king! There is no honourable medium."

These words from a prison-house turned "El Chico's" brooding apathy into a fierce resolve to secure success at all costs. His mother spoke truth: he was indeed Sultan, his uncle a mere usurper, and "Surely," as he expressed his desire with a wistful appeal to Providence hitherto always his seeming



enemy, "Allah will befriend the righteous cause?"

"Who is ready to follow his monarch unto death?" he asked that night of the few faithful nobles who formed his Court; and all laid their hands on their scimitars in response and swore to live or die with him whatever should befall.

Three days later he stood before the gates of the Albaycin, some fifty of the faithful lurking behind him in the shadows, and challenged the peaceful stillness of the night by a clanging knock upon the gate.

"Who seeks to enter?" asked the sentry.

"Your King!" replied "El Chico" simply, and after a moment's hesitation the man, seizing up a torch that he might gauge the truth of this astounding statement, set the wicket wide.

"The Sultan Boabdil has returned to his own!"

Like a flame of joy the news spread through the poorer streets and was borne on the wings of ill-omen to "El Zagal," as he lay on his divan in the Alhambra, rousing him at dawn in furious haste to repel the invader.

Again the old blood-feud raged, but this time with no hope of compromise. Boabdil, in the desperate madness born of past humiliation and defeat, cared not how far he should sacrifice faith and country by calling in Christian aid, so long as he might ruin his personal enemy.

"El Zagal," on the other hand, confronted by the news that Ferdinand had invested the important sea-coast town of Velez-Malaga, one of the southern bulwarks of the Kingdom of Granada, was so much moved by a desperate appeal from the garrison that he should sally forth to their relief, that he attempted to



win over his nephew to a truce in order to enable him to undertake this expedition. He met with an indignant and not unmerited refusal.

"How shall I trust a man who has murdered my father and kindred by treachery and repeatedly sought my own life by violence and stratagem?" So Boabdil answered the ambassadors and renewed his attacks on the Alhambra with increasing ardour.

"El Zagal," as he wasted men and money in defence of his palace, saw himself caught in a trap. To march out of the city with the flower of his army was to place his hold on Granada in jeopardy, yet to watch Velez-Malaga fall and do nothing to save her was to merit the old Santon's mocking criticism . . . .

"You are striving to be king yet suffer the kingdom to be lost!"

His wild blood dictated that he should run risks rather than let the name of "the Valiant" be forgotten or exchanged for "the Coward" or "Dotard." One dark night, therefore, with their horses' hoofs muffled, "El Zagal" and a picked host of Moors silently stole out of the capital and away across the mountains. The hard-pressed garrison of Velez-Malaga rejoiced as they saw the warning beacons on the heights and knew themselves remembered; but Ferdinand and his army, surprised and for the moment alarmed, wondered what lay before them in the coming battle.

Had "the Valiant" triumphed as his personal bravery deserved, the history of Granada would in all probability have turned a different page. Destiny, however, decided otherwise, and a secret letter, despatched by the old Sultan to the Commander of the

garrison, bidding him sally forth at a certain hour when the troops from Granada would also assault the Christians, was intercepted, and the plan of a combined Moorish attack foiled.

Like a whirlwind "El Zagal" descended from the mountains as he had promised; but the garrison of Velez-Malaga did not stir, and his enemies, prepared for his coming, met his onrush at all points with disdainful confidence. Repeated failure to break the Christian lines at last sped panic through the Moorish host. As a devastating wind it passed, and "El Zagal," blowing his trumpets for a renewed attack, realised bitterly that he sounded the clarion call to deaf ears. Only the dead and wounded were left on the plain, and on the heights above the ground was piled with scimitars and lances that his men had cast from them in their desire to seek a quick and easy road to safety.

The first fugitives that carried the news of the disaster to Granada hid their own shame beneath complaints against their Commander, crying aloud in the streets that it was the Sultan Abdallah who had been defeated and he who had bid them fly. In a wave of indignation the fickle populace accepted this verdict and denounced the ruler who had risked his life and throne on their behalf, applauding instead the young Sultan whose selfish fears had done more than anything else during the last few years to weaken the Moslem cause.

"Long live Boabdil 'El Chico'! . . . Long live the rightful King of Granada! . . . Death to all usurpers."

From the mean streets of the Albaycin, Boabdil was

borne in triumph to the luxurious halls of the Alhambra amid cheering crowds, and saw the gates of the city shut in the face of his rival. He had succeeded at last. Even more satisfying to the bitter hatred that misfortune had bred in a nature otherwise open and generous was the knowledge that his rival had failed, for "El Zagal," beaten back by his own subjects from the gates of his capital, had little heart to defend the rest of his possessions, now in imminent danger owing to the steady Christian advance through the Kingdom of Granada.

First Velez-Malaga, its relief column destroyed, agreed to surrender; and then, after a prolonged siege, Malaga itself, the most important harbour on the southern seaboard. Ferdinand next invested the city of Baeza, held by Cid Haya, "El Zagal's" brother-in-law, an astute Moor who, though daring and resolute, as his prowess during the early days of the siege showed, was no fanatic and clever enough to realise ere long that he was wasting his brains and energy in a lost cause.

When he became convinced that the Christian sovereigns were in such a mood that nothing would induce them to desist from their campaigns so long as a strip of land in Granada refused to own their sway, he contrasted this exalted patriotism with the divided counsels of the Mahometan kingdom. The result of his meditations was that in December, 1489, the famous Moorish Prince surrendered his stronghold on favourable terms for himself and his garrison. According to the Castilian chroniclers, he was so gratified by the marks of favour that he received from his conquerors and so conscious of the errors of the

faith in which he had been born that very shortly he was converted to Christianity and married one of the Queen's favourite ladies-in-waiting.

Cid Haya's first practical service to his new sovereigns was a journey in person to Guadix where he pointed out to his royal brother-in-law the advantages of a peaceful settlement between the Kingdoms of Granada and Castile. What appealed a great deal more to "El Zagal" in his melancholy mood, and probably bought his acquiescence in Cid Haya's proposals, was the reflection that a people so treacherous as the fickle inhabitants of Granada were scarcely worth protecting. Thus "the Valiant," who had been ready to die for his faith and country on many a battlefield, surrendered at last, on terms of capitulation that, while they gave Guadix to his enemies, left him with the title of King and a small strip of Granadian territory.

When the news was brought to Boabdil by his Vizier, "El Chico" could not contain his joy.

"God is great!" he said. "Rejoice with me, O Jusef. The stars have ceased their persecution. Henceforth let no man call me 'El Zogoybi.'"

Then he bade his attendants bring him armour and a steed and summoned his bodyguard, and with banners flying and a glittering train he rode out of the Alhambra, expecting to receive the plaudits and congratulations of his subjects lining the streets. Instead he saw averted or scowling faces, and was puzzled by the sound of mourning as he approached the principal square. Granada also had heard of the once "Valiant's" surrender, but she mourned the loss of a famous city while her short-sighted King rejoiced only in the humiliation of its commander.



Slowly and silently "El Chico" returned to the palace, and the Vizier, to whom he complained of the contrast between his own joy and the public depression, answered . . . .

"Sire, the tempest has ceased to rage from one point of the Heavens, it is true: but any day it may begin to howl from another."

The warning was justified when, in response to a letter sent from Boabdil to Ferdinand, expressing the former's willingness to hold Granada as a fief of the Castilian crown, the Christian monarch replied by reminding his vassal of the terms he had signed at Loxa. Had he not agreed, as soon as Guadix was taken by his allies, to lay down his arms and retire to that city with the title of Duke? Since "El Zagal" had surrendered, Ferdinand pointed out that the way lay open for him to fulfil this obligation.

In the moment he read this missive "El Chico's" new found pride and joy were stripped from him, and humiliated and alarmed he sought the advice of his cousin, Muza Ben Abul Gazan, a famous warrior. The latter answered in fury:

"Does the Christian King think we are old men? Let him know that a Moor is born to the spear and scimitar. If he desire our arms, let him come and win them, but let him win them dearly."

So answered all the other nobles, and Boabdil, gazing on their fierce faces, and noting the strength and thickness of his walls, felt courage and hope dawn again. Instead of agreeing to Ferdinand's wishes he wrote that it was impossible for him to comply with them, since such an act as his retreat to Guadix would



be a treacherous betrayal of his own subjects, who were prepared to fight to the death.

At once he began his preparations for war, and Muza Ben Abul Gazan collected a band of picked horsemen, and with these he rode proudly across "the Vega" in front of the city, attacking and reducing small Christian fortresses and driving home before him their inhabitants, laden with stores. The crowds who assembled to watch his return believed the old days of glory and plenty had come again; and indeed for some time Ferdinand and Isabel dallied in Castile and made no military demonstration against their rebellious vassal.

The winter months passed, and then, suddenly, in the spring of 1490, the vanguard of the Christian army appeared upon the scenes, ravaging and burning crops and fruit trees up to the very gates of Granada; a performance they repeated in the autumn, and each time by such numbers that even the brave Muza could do little more than harass their movements.

"We must fight with patience and perseverance," said Ferdinand, refusing all suggestions of a definite assault upon walls so strongly built and guarded; and how far he was determined to pursue this policy of wearing away what he could not cut could be gauged in the following year. Then it was that to their horror the men and women of Granada saw rising on "the Vega" before their gates a new city, constructed of stone, and realised that it was a symbol of the Christian intention to remain in the Kingdom of Granada for ever. "Santa Fé," or "Holy Faith," the Castilians called this new town, declaring that it was the only one within the Mahometan borders that had not been defiled by

infidel worship; but to the Moors it was the work of the Devil, and its rising walls an object of execration and fear.

Muza Ben Abul Gazan was alone undaunted and encouraged the patriotism of the young nobles, whose task it was to help him defend the main gateways of Granada.

"We have nothing left to fight for," he said, "but the ground on which we stand: when this is lost we cease to be a country or a name."

Fired by these words, Tarfe, a noted Moorish champion, who was riding one day beyond the walls in search of adventure, determined to mock the strength of the armies by which his city was surrounded.

Wheeling, he leaped the barrier that separated him from his foes, and bending low on his saddle, rode straight for that part of the Christian camp where he saw the royal banners floating in the sun. Before the door of the principal tent he cast his lance into the ground, then turned, evading the Castilian guards who tried to intercept him, and made his way to Granada safe and sound.

Those who pulled up the lance found attached to it a label bearing an insulting message addressed to the Christian Queen, and as they stood, angry and mortified, a young cavalier, Fernando de Pulgar, famous in Spanish history as "he of the Exploits," stepped forward and vowed that he would take a suitable vengeance.

Late that night he and fifteen boon companions, whom he had selected for their valour and quick wits, left the camp secretly, and approaching a small postern gate to one side of the city, forced an entrance but

feebly guarded by Moorish foot-soldiers. Without waiting to do more than cut a passage for their horses the Christian knights rode furiously through the streets to the principal mosque, and here Fernando, dismounting, affixed with his dagger to the door of the temple a tablet bearing the words so holy and dear to Catholics but accursed in Mahometan ears, "Ave Maria," "Hail Mary."

Declaring aloud that he dedicated this building henceforth as a Christian chapel, the young leader of the band of adventurers remounted, set spurs to his horse, and rode back as he had come, fighting his way through a mob of frightened citizens and angry soldiers, unable to grasp the meaning of this miniature assault upon their walls. Next morning, when light revealed the tablet on the mosque door, the import of the night alarm became known; and Tarfe, pulling out Fernando's dagger, attached the inscription to a cord that he tied to his horse's tail and so set forth to trail it in the dust before the Christian lines.

Of the ensuing struggle, in which Tarfe lost his life after deeds of prodigious valour against a Castilian champion, there is no space to write here. Acts of individual Moslem and Christian daring would fill a chapter of themselves, but it must be remembered that their glory though it distinguished did not decide the fate of Granada. It was the slow strangulation of hunger, when the whole "Vega" lay at last in the grip of Ferdinand's army, and adventurous sallies became no longer possible, that broke the resolution of the besieged citizens, and led the Governor of the town to approach his Sultan with the once derided word "Surrender."

"Our granaries," he said, "are nearly exhausted, and no further supplies are to be expected . . . the very horses are killed for food . . . our city contains two hundred thousand inhabitants, old and young, with each a mouth that calls piteously for bread."

Boabdil, never sure of his own mind, carried this appeal to his royal council, and one of his most respected advisers at once answered:

"Of what avail is our defence indeed? Since the enemy is determined to persist in the siege there remains no alternative save surrender or death."

At this, Muza Ben Abul Gazan rose abruptly from his chair. . . .

". . . . Much rather would I be numbered among those who fell in the defence of Granada than among those who survived to witness her capitulation."

So he spoke, daring as of old, but his voice was no longer the mouthpiece of the majority, and realising from the general silence the failure of his influence, he strode from the room and was seen no more. Rumour declared he died in single combat against a troop of Christians without the walls; but few of those for whom he had fought wondered at his disappearance or mourned his loss.

On the 25th of November, 1491, the terms of the surrender of Granada were signed, and on the 2nd of January in the New Year, Boabdil "El Chico," quitted for ever the palace of his ancestors and rode slowly out through the deserted streets where his name had once conjured men to deeds of heroism. As he met the first detachment of the Christian army approaching the town, he stopped and addressed the Commander . . .

"Go! Take possession of these fortresses," he said



with mournful earnestness. "Allah hath bestowed them on your powerful lord in punishment of the sins of the Moors."

Then he turned, and silently, with head bent, continued his road of exile until he came to the place where the Christian Sovereigns had halted with their Court to await his submission, and watch for that blessed moment when, on the Tower of Comares, first a massive silver cross and then the royal banner and the standard of Santiago should announce to the world their victory.

The Moorish King would have dismounted and kissed his conquerors' hands, but they graciously refused this act of homage, and still seated on horseback he gave into their keeping the keys of Granada.

"These," he said, "are the last relics of the Arabian Empire in Spain. Thine, O King, are our trophies, our kingdom and person. Such is the will of God."

Then Ferdinand answered smoothly:

"Be assured thou shalt regain from our friendship the prosperity of which the fortunes of war hath deprived thee."

But Boabdil "El Chico," while he thanked his overlord for the promise, guessed it as delusive as all former promises. He would pass to his grave "Unfortunate" as he had come into the world.

Leaving the triumphant Christian hosts behind him, he could still, as he paused on the summit of a neighbouring hill, hear the salvo of artillery with which the Alhambra had jubilantly welcomed her new masters.

"God is great," he exclaimed with Mahometan resignation, but the tears stood in his eyes. . . . "God



is great indeed," he repeated, "but when did misfortunes ever equal mine?" and the tears of self-pity flowed down his cheeks.

Those who witnessed his grief pitied him also and called this hill in remembrance "The last sigh of the Moor"; but his mother, Aixa, who had upheld his cause through war, exile and imprisonment, was now only moved to indignation.

"You do well, my son," she exclaimed harshly, "to weep like a woman for that which you were not able to defend as a man."

Many years later the famous Emperor Charles V walked through the palace of the Alhambra that his grandparents Ferdinand and Isabel had conquered, and so overcome was he by the beauty of the architecture and gardens in the midst of which he stood that he declared fervently:

"I would rather have chosen to make this my grave than have lived an exile from it."

The last of the Moors had been incapable of this resolution. In exile he died, and it is said that men of his own race tore up the tombstone that was placed above his head, carried it to the neighbouring public baths, and built it into the threshold.

"Thus," they said, "shall all who enter trample on the name of this Boabdil who betrayed the Kingdom of the Prophet in Spain."

A more detailed account of the splendid pageantry and deeds of arms that have made the last struggle between Christians and Moors famous in romantic history can be found in Washington Irving's "Conquest of Granada."

## APPENDIX.

SOME AUTHORITIES ON MEDIAEVAL  
SPANISH HISTORY.

IN his introduction to "The Rise of the Spanish Empire," Professor R. B. Merriman alludes to "the great Moorish invasion of 711" as "the decisive event in mediaeval Spanish history"; yet about this event, save that it was the inevitable sequel to the Mahometan conquest of North Africa, there is but meagre information that can be labelled authentic. Even the existence of King Rodrigo and Count Julian has been denied; and though their names may perhaps be rescued from the lumber-room of legend to which a few scholars have consigned them, they must reappear from the strict historian's point of view stripped of romantic trappings, such as the tales of Hercules' Tower, of Florinda "La Cava," of "Orelia," the snow-white steed wandering riderless on the banks of the Guadalete.

To those for whom legend and tradition are, however, not mere lumber but the expression of a nation's youthful dreams and ambitions, mediaeval Spain presents a mine of interest in the records of both Arabic and Christian writers.

The following books are specially recommended:—

#### CHAPTERS I—III.

GAYANGOS, PASCUAL DE.—“Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain” (2 vols.).

DOZY, REINHARDT.—“Spanish Islam.” (This has been admirably translated by F. Griffin Stokes. In its pages the story of “Almanzor” reads like a chapter from the “Arabian Nights.”)

SCOTT.—“History of the Moorish Empire in Spain” (3 vols.).

POOLE, R. LANE.—“Moslem Spain” (Stories of the Nations).

LYNCH, HANNAH.—“Toledo” (Mediaeval Towns).

#### CHAPTER IV.

Almanzor’s invasion of Galicia is described in Dozy’s “Spanish Islam,” while for other tales concerning “Santiago,” see Gasquoine Hartley’s “Santiago de Compostella” (Mediaeval Towns); also “España Sagrada,” edited Florez.

(It is interesting to note that St. James’ first appearance as a knight, at the battle of Clavijo, 844 A.D., is attested by a contemporary charter of Ramiro I, pledging an annual tribute of corn and wine to the church of Santiago in reward for the Saint’s services. See Prescott’s “Ferdinand and Isabella,” ch. 1 note.)

#### CHAPTERS V & VI.

BUTLER, CLARKE.—“The Cid” (Heroes of the Nations).

SOUTHEY, ROBERT.—“Chronicle of the Cid” (Morley’s Universal Library). (The groundwork of this book is part of the “Cronica General de España,” the most ancient of the prose chronicles of Spain, the early portions of which were compiled during the reign of Alfonso “the learned” (1252-1284). Robert Southey translated the section of this chronicle referring to the Cid, enriching his account with extracts from “The Poem of the Cid” (an heroic song written probably within fifty years of Ruy Diaz’ death), and also from early “Spanish Ballads.”)

#### CHAPTER VII.

A concise account of “En Jacme’s” life has been written by Swift—“Life and Times of James I of Aragon,” but the charm of this Spanish hero lies really in his own autobiography, admirably translated from the Catalan by J. Foster (2 vols.).

(The King’s authorship has been denied, but most critics believe on insufficient grounds.)

## CHAPTERS VIII & IX.

The chief modern authority for these chapters is Prosper Mérimée's "Histoire de Don Pedro 1er" (translated Bohn Series (2 vols.)), a book based mainly on Pedro Lopez de Ayala's "Cronicas de los Reyes de Castilla, Pedro I, Enrique II," etc., and Froissart's "Chronicles" (ch. ccxxviii, *et seq.*).

(Professor Merriman says of Ayala: "This important writer's work marks the transition from the age of chronicle to that of history in the real sense of the word.")

There is also a "Life of the notorious Don Pedro the Cruel" by Edward Storer (1 vol.).

## CHAPTER X.

The principal authority for the life of Alvaro de Luna is his biography, written by a contemporary and fervent admirer, "Cronica de Alvaro de Luna" (edited Florez). The scene of "the Master's" arrest and execution has been vividly translated by Fitzmaurice Kelly in his "History of Spanish Literature."

See also "Cronica de Juan II," "Cronica del Rey Enrique IV" (Enriquez de Castillo), "Generaciones y Semblanzas" (Hernando de Pulgar).

## CHAPTER XI.

Besides the chronicles just mentioned see also "Relacion Historica del—Don Carlos de Viana" (Jose Querault y Nuet—Documentos Ineditos), Aleson "Annales de Navarre," and Quintana's "Lives of Celebrated Spaniards" (translated).

## CHAPTERS XII & XIII.

The authorities, both original and modern, dealing with "the Catholic Kings" are so numerous that readers can only be referred here to some of the principal English works on the subject:—

PRESCOTT.—"History of Ferdinand and Isabella" (1 vol.).

WASHINGTON IRVING.—"Conquest of Granada" (1 vol.). This romantic work, told largely in the form of extracts from an imaginary author, "Fra Antonio Agapida," is drawn direct from the writings of contemporary authorities such as Bernaldez (Curate of Los Palacios in Andalusia), Hernando de Pulgar (Secretary to the Sovereigns), Peter Martyr (Court Tutor), Zurita (official chronicler of the Kingdom of Aragon), etc.

MERRIMAN, R. BIGELOW.—"The Rise of the Spanish Empire" (2 vols.). (For original authorities see Merriman's bibliography, ch. xii).

BUTLER, CLARKE. "The Catholic Kings" (Cambridge Modern History, vol. I).

PLUNKET, IERNE L.—"Isabel of Castile."

# GENERAL AUTHORITIES FOR THE MEDIAEVAL PERIOD

## SPANISH.

LAFUENTE, DON MODESTO.—“ Historia General de España ” (vols. I—VII).

ALTAMIRA.—“ Historia de España ” (vols. I and II).  
(Chiefly economic and social in scope.)

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